

CRASH

MICRO ACTION

A FUSION RETRO PUBLICATION

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MAGAZINE IN
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FOREST FULL REVIEW OF
ATIC ATAC NEXT**

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CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION



the competitions over the course of the day (and into the evening) and have promised to give out some prizes to those who get highest scores on select games.

AN ANNUAL EVENT

And so just like that, in a couple of weeks time from now the CRASH Annual will have come back from the printers hopefully just in time to bring along to the CRASH event on the 18th November.

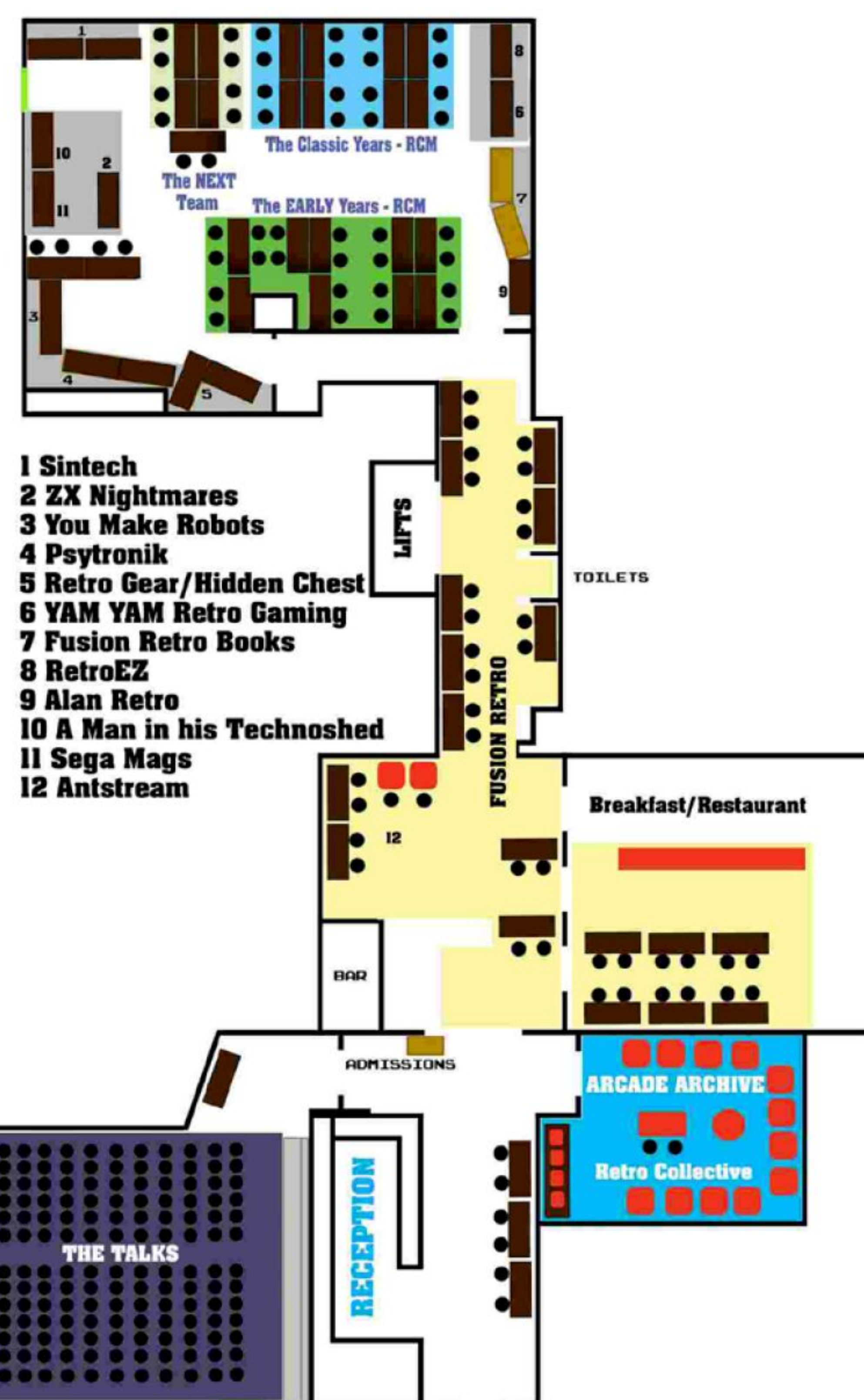
Preparations for the event have been going really well and we do have some great guests this year. You can see the floorplan to the right, highlighting all our traders this year - more than we had at last year's show.

In attendance for the first time is Antstream. The guys will be looking after

AN ANNUAL

The Annual will be sent out to those you who have pledged on the Kickstarter towards to the end of November - both in A4 and A5 sizes where appropriate - the cover is of course one of Oli's later XMAS covers. On of the perks offered to the backers is our new CRASH XMAS mug - you can order one of these off our Merchandise site - www.fusionretromerchandise.com.

All that leaves me to say is have a great XMAS and New Year and hopefully see at the CRASH Live event.



Oliver Trex



NEWS & PREVIEW

Hello you lovely bunch, and welcome to another round-up of ZX headlines to get your bits in a twist (always with the bits jokes Ed!).

To kick off, Fitosoft have just announced **Transylvanian Castle Dx2**. Described as an intuitive RPG, the game will see you fight a range of enemies as you try to escape a castle in under three days! on.mom/MMiK

Elsewhere, fans of eerie puzzler **Tenebra** will be delighted to read that a sequel is now available. *Tenebra* was reviewed in CRASH 13 and scored a solid 88%. Expect a review for this one soon. on.mom/VSVo

Prolific developer Hicks has just launched **Haoken**, an exciting new action platforming game consisting of three acts. Distinguishing **Haoken** will be our hero's extensive move

set, including dash, double jump, and slash. This one is already shaping up to be a cut above. on.mom/jUpi

Down The Pipe: Reflushed is an update to the original game (CRASH #2 78%) and is now available. Unlike our hero Turdesley, this looks solid, and fans of the original should definitely grab this updated release. on.mom/Jley

Lastly for the month, we're thrilled to see that **Forest Escape** (a sequel to **Castle Escape**) has been announced. Featuring stunning art from Craig Stevenson (see this month's Simon's Screens), this is one everybody should be keeping an eye on: on.mom/QGgX



DAVID JONES BOOTS UP



Creator of the *Magic Knight* games and all-round Speccy legend David Jones has recently released his first of a trilogy of novels, *Booting Ada*. Set in 2045, a team of scientists have created the first sentient AI, which has named herself Ada. How will such advanced AI fare and what challenges will she face?

Booting Ada is available on Amazon in both Kindle and paperback format here: bit.ly/3ZmqFKI

DOOM 4 U



One of the landmark achievements for the Spec was the 1996 demo of *Doom* by Digital Reality. Featuring full colour, crash resistant (well...) graphics, and a range of different enemies and weapons, the game scrimped on neither performance nor explosion and sounded amazing to boot. After previously only being available as a TR-DOS disk, a .ttx release has been discovered, which you can download at: mysl.nl/ZXaX

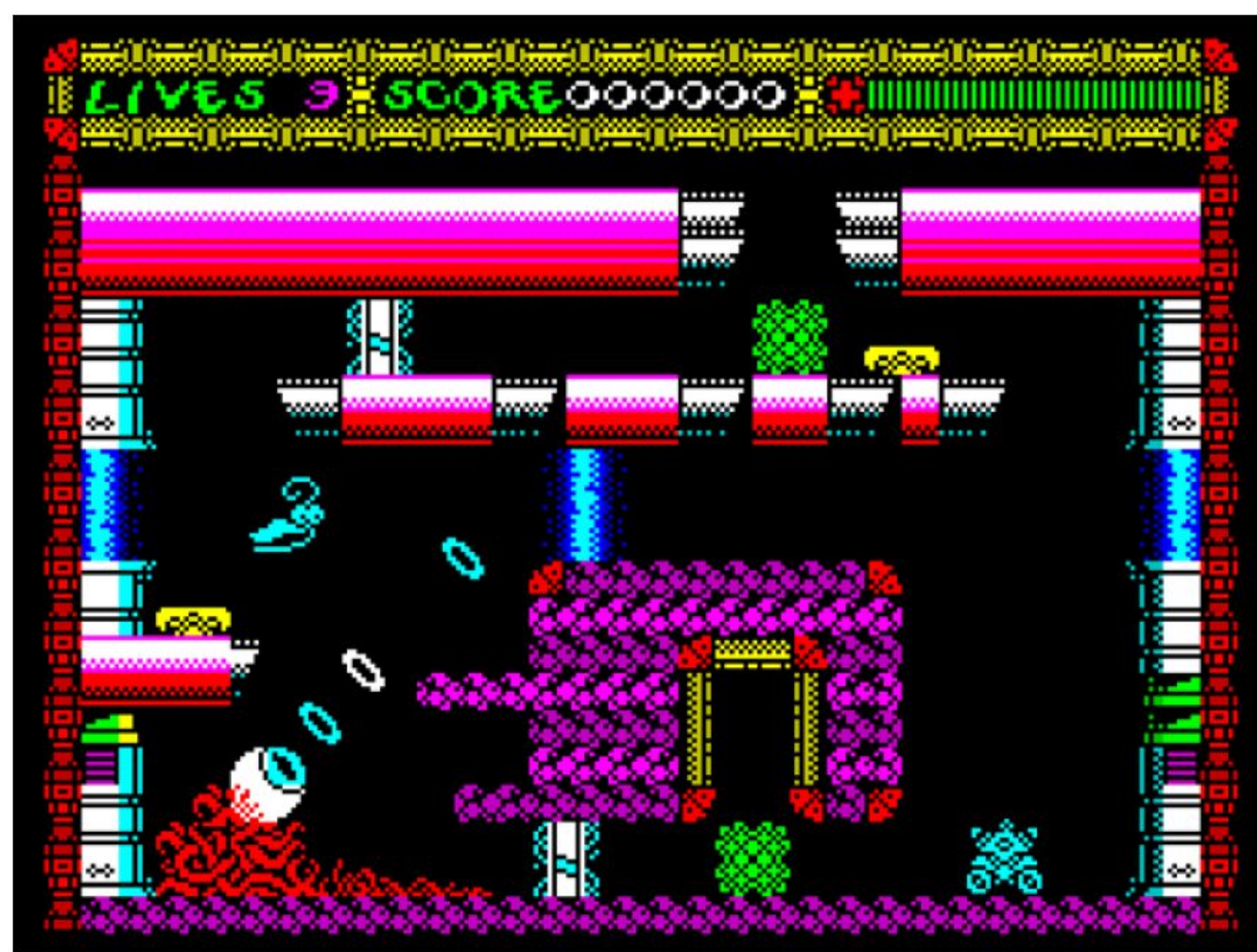
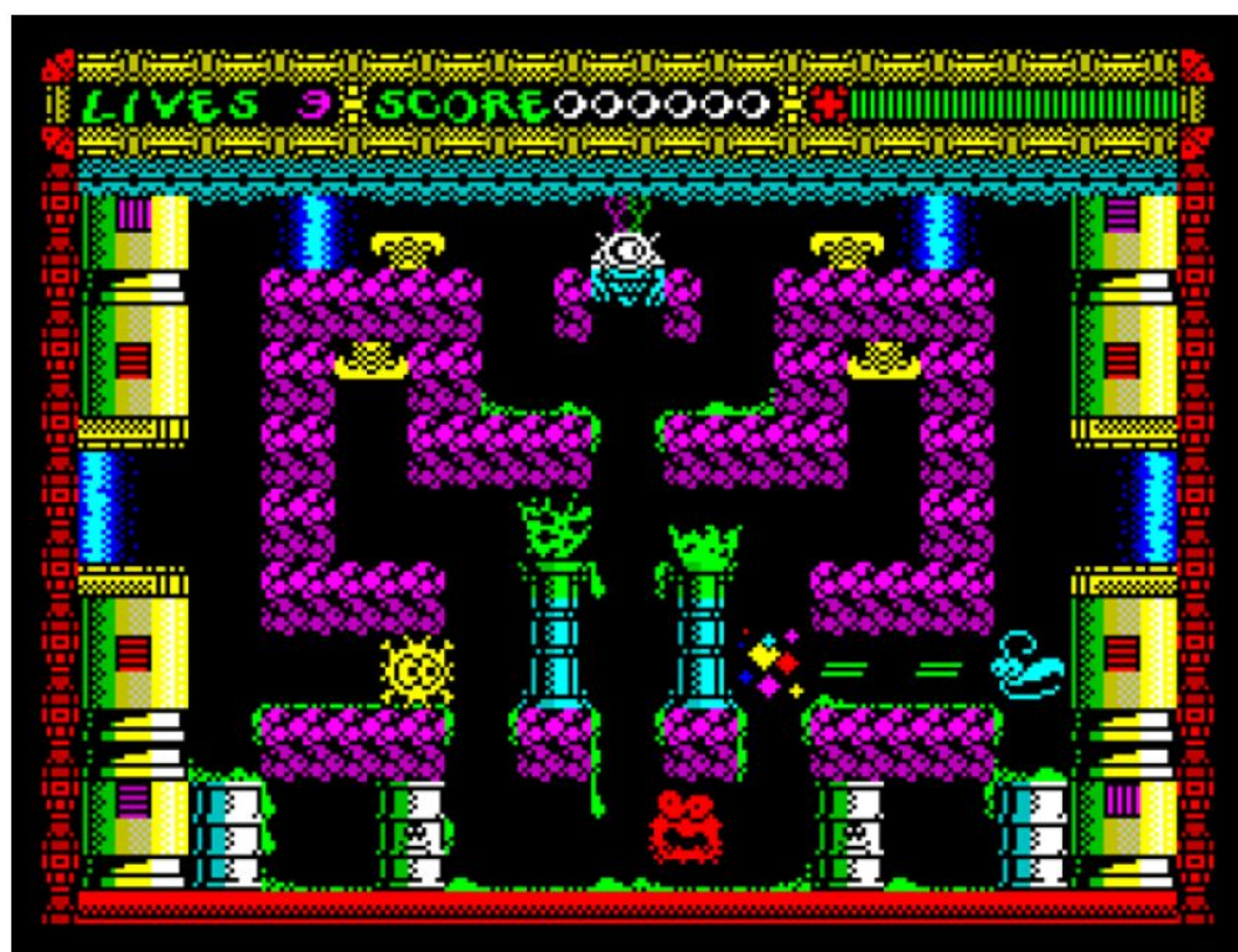
PREVIEWS

Superhair 3: Hair Trigger

They say all good things come in threes, and this is no exception to this rule. Lee 'Chops' Stevenson is busy at work on the next adventure of Mr Hair, who is becoming a bit of a modern-day mascot for the Spectrum. We were

lucky enough to see a running video clip of the game, and it looks superbly *Cybernoid*-influenced. Just check out the number of colours on display and excellent spritemanship (is that a word?) going on in the graphics department.

It promises to be a Cecco-inspired arcade game with plenty of hairy twists. We'll have to exercise some patience, as it's slated for release in 2024. We're confident that Lee will keep us updated on its development.



Saboteur Remastered

The legendary Clive Townsend has made a remarkable comeback with his iconic infiltration game for the Spectrum Next.

Social media has erupted with excitement over this announcement, and word on the street is that it's rather good. Just imagine the same

look and feel as the original but with better colour and improved fidelity. Why are you still reading this? Nip over to Clive's site and pre-order this for your



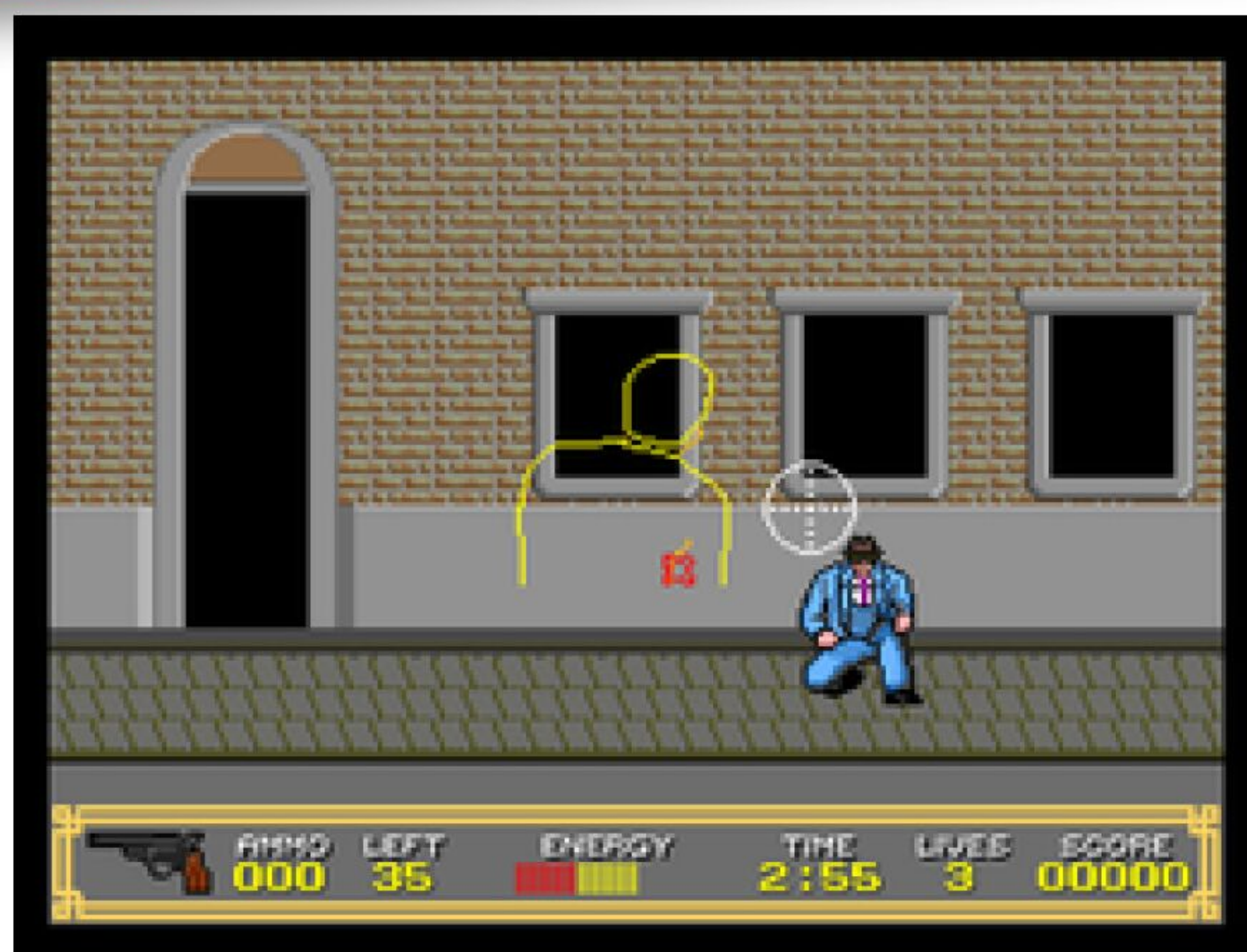
Next. The game is expected to ship in November - just in time to beg for it as a Christmas present.

clivetownsend.com

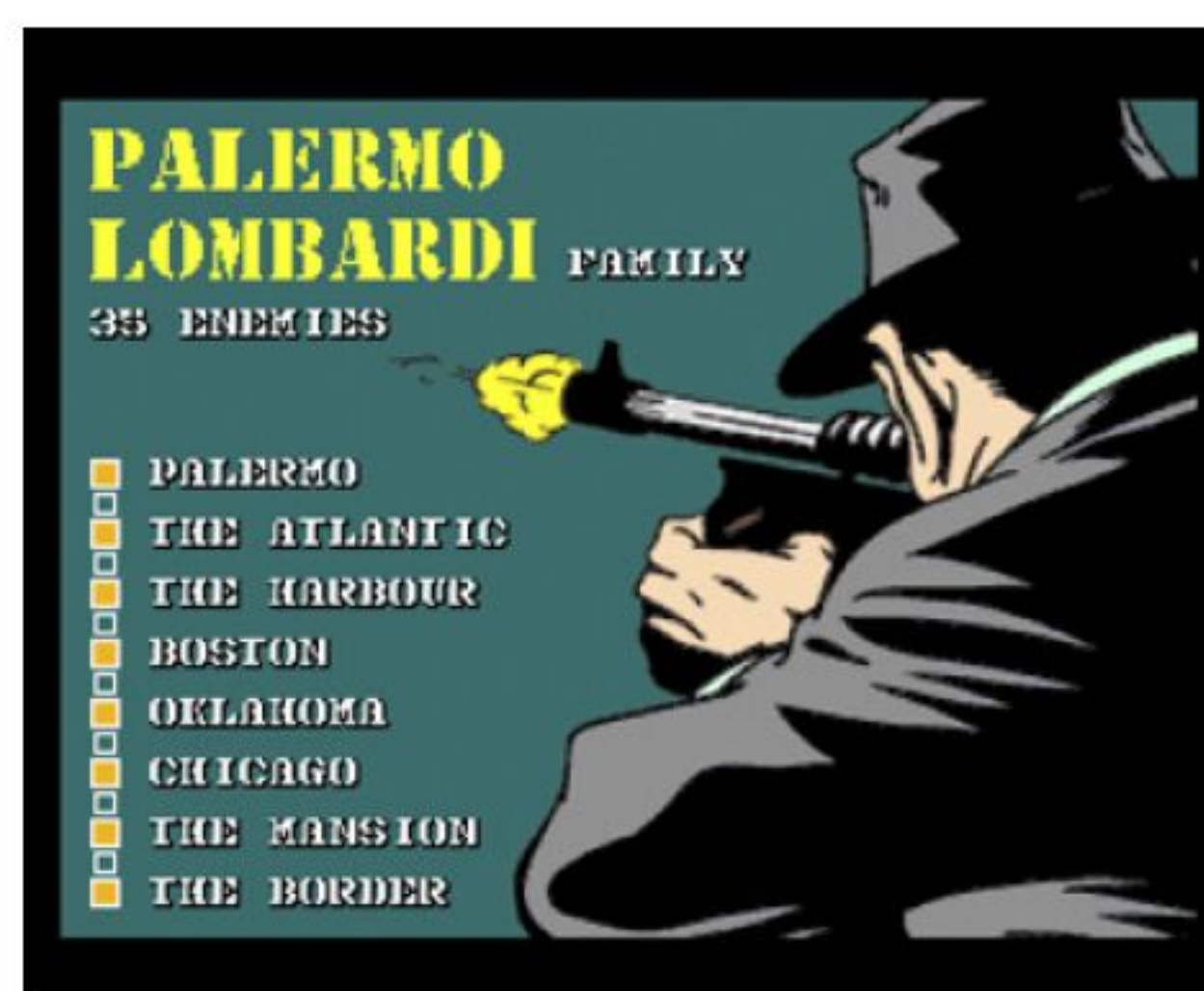
A Sneaky Release



Magnum: Clean Shoot



Andrew Laird of *Bikers* and *Tengu* fame is showing off his coding skills for the Next yet again by leaping into a different genre than



he's worked on before. This time, he's taking on the might of Empire City: 1931 and offering his unique interpretation called *Magnum:*

Clean Shoot. The last adaptation we saw for the Spectrum dates all the way back to 1987 by Infogrames, which was a monochromatic affair and made it quite challenging to spot the gangsters who were the prey for your sharpshooting skills. This version provides us with a closer feel to the arcade but with its own distinct design.

Midnight Brew

Software house Midnight Brew, with its mission statement dedicated to helping developers - not only to get their games physically released but also to assist them in adding that extra touch of polish - has been in contact with CRASH. On speaking with Allan Turvey, he informs us that he's ready



to have the launch titles produced in time for the CRASH event in November – how exciting is that? The physical copies will be available to purchase. For those who can't manage to come to the event (shame on

you), you can also pre-order from the link below. In the meantime, take a look at these screenshots



from one of the label's new games – *OOZE*. This beautifully designed game puts you in control of a small slime blob with the ability to reverse gravity. Based on the advanced copy we've had the opportunity to preview, Midnight Brew is staying true to its promise of delivering games with finesse and polish. Check out the other titles on the list: *Mr Do!*, *Lunar Rescue*, *Rally X* & *Nothing*.

ko-fi.com/midnightbrew/shop

Two Sugars Please

DORIEL RUNNER



Briefer666

£ DONATION • 09/2023 • 48K

DOWNLOAD: <https://on.mom/fcoc>

Run, run as fast as you can - you can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man! Not in this game, you're not. You're Deckard - yes, that one - and in this game, you have to do what that particular film's title, in which Deckard features, suggests you do - run...ner. I guess that doesn't work, but you know what I mean. This isn't an official film tie-in, of course, but it seems creator Briefer666 has nabbed the name of the main character to nimbly tie into the play on the film's title. That was rather wordy and confusing. Basically, the game's title is a play on the film Blade Runner, with 'runner' being the operative word, as you have to do lots of running. Right, that explains it enough, I think. There's no real story here, other than you are set atop quite the stretch of roofs as you

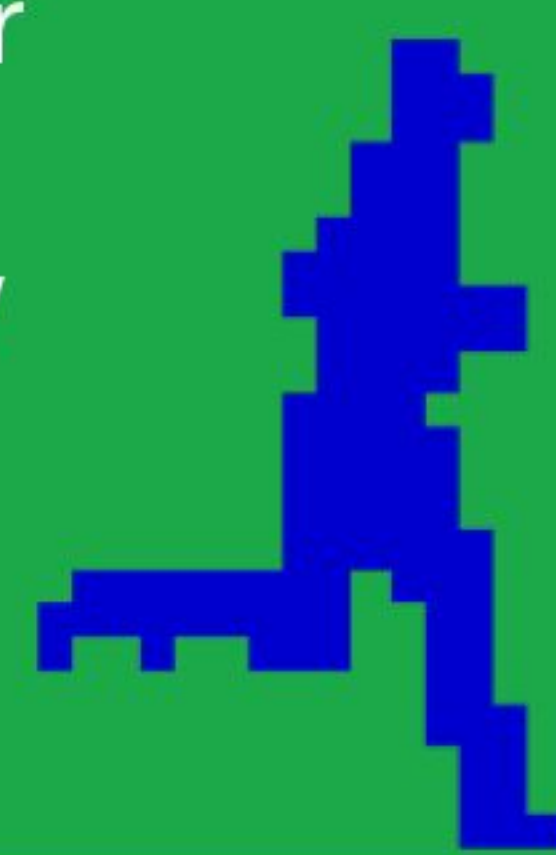
manoeuvre up and under various obstacles, over chasms, and hopefully, avoid getting shot (or jumping into) the dangerous drones that pass overhead. It's a dangerous world out there, you'd better get your running shoes on.

Criticism

What I like about this game is that from the title menu you can choose the game's colour scheme, with multiple options for the foreground and background of the game. This means that a black background with a red foreground gives you brilliant contrast of the two colours, making it rather slick. A black and blue combination will give you *Saboteur* feels, but the

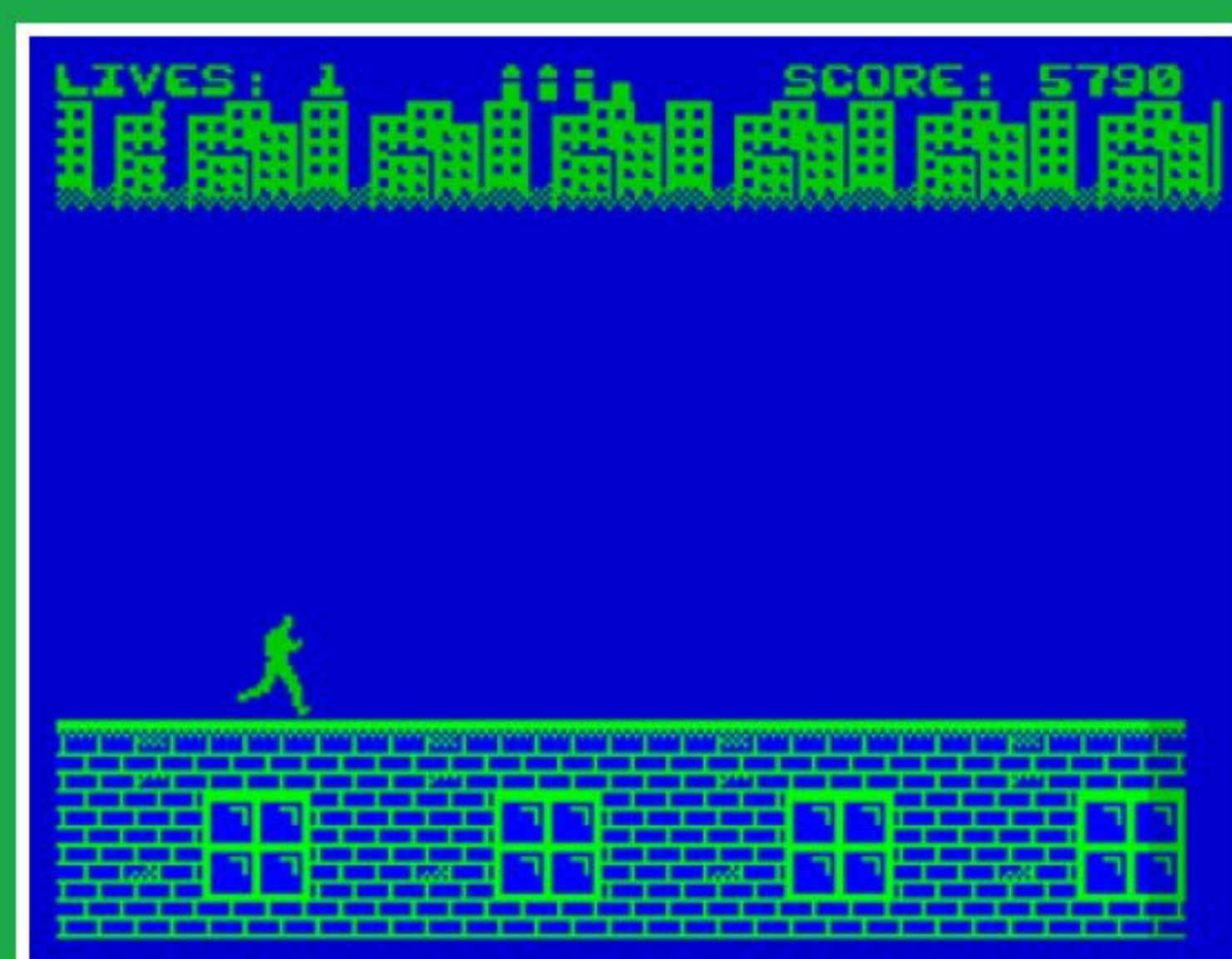
most important aspect of this is that you can make it as garish as you like, too. Magenta and green? Yes, please! On top of this, you can also choose the game's speed, ranging from 'Fast' to 'Insane'; as you can imagine, the latter will have you needing very quick reactions and nimble fingers indeed.

The game itself runs pretty smooth, no matter what speed you select, as you slide under hurdles, over fuel cans, and over the sometimes rather large gaps between each building. Throw in a laser-equipped drone or several, and you have a challenge on



your hands to stay alive. As frantic as it is, this game is the most 'arcade' you could find - a game made purely to see how high a score you can get and how far you can travel before you come a cropper to a fuel barrel, or if you're more like me, smashing your face against the side of a building. Ouch.

- Paul Davies



Gordon's Take

Although Endless Runner games aren't my jam (scunnered by their over-saturation on the mobile game market), they are few and far between on the Spectrum, and this title is rather charming. The first thing that stands out is the excellent running animations for the main sprite - remember how in awe we were with Cuchulainn's gait in *Tir na Nog*? Written in Boriel Basic - hence its name - the game has its limitations, but for a game written like this, it's admirably impressive (especially the scrolling) and very playable. The odd bit of slowdown is a niggle, but it doesn't kill the enjoyment of this simple game.



Comments

The graphics are simple to look at though there's a nice animation on your little running guy - the customisation of colours is a nice touch. Overall, this is a nice little game if you fancy a high score challenge with some friends, or if you're just into that kind of thing, but other than that it's one you may only pick up on occasion rather than coming back to it over and over again.

Keyboard: Q,A,O,P, SPACE /
Redefinable.
Joystick: n/a



Use of Computer:	70%
Graphics:	75%
Playability:	75%
Getting started:	80%
Addictive Qualities:	75%
Overall:	70%

CRAZY FOREST



Daniel Isoba

£ 1 OR MORE • 09/2023 • 128K

DOWNLOAD: <https://on.mom/SOIE>

The partnership of Waldo the dog and Agatha the cat was broken after their last battle together. Waldo lost his eye, and Agatha, rather more seriously, lost her life. Sad times. What's even sadder is that

Waldo learns that the forest of Durnwhich is infested with evil creatures, and he must find a way to rid the forest of said evil beings. There is one monster in charge of them all, though: Thulhu, but unfortunately, it can only



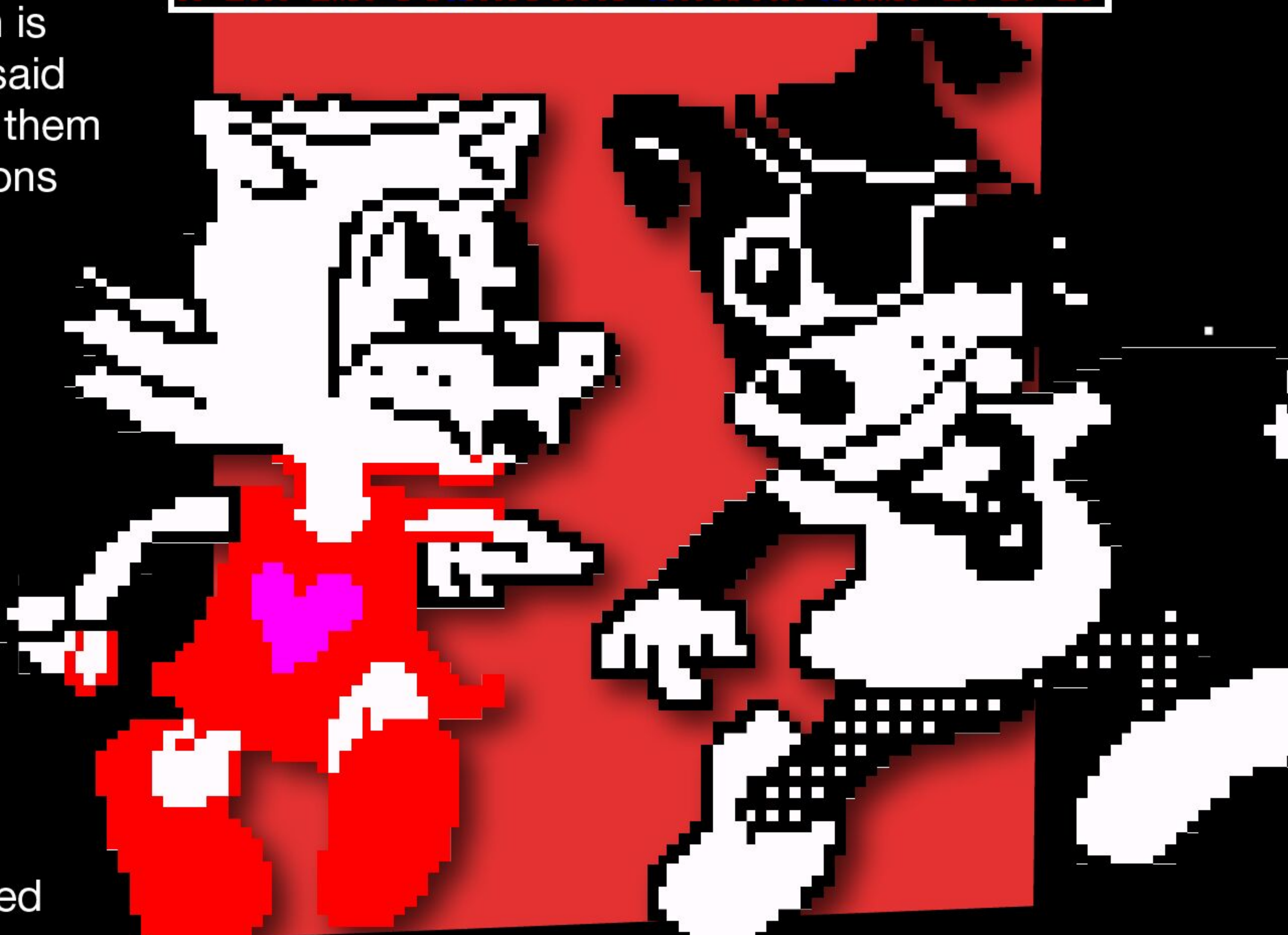
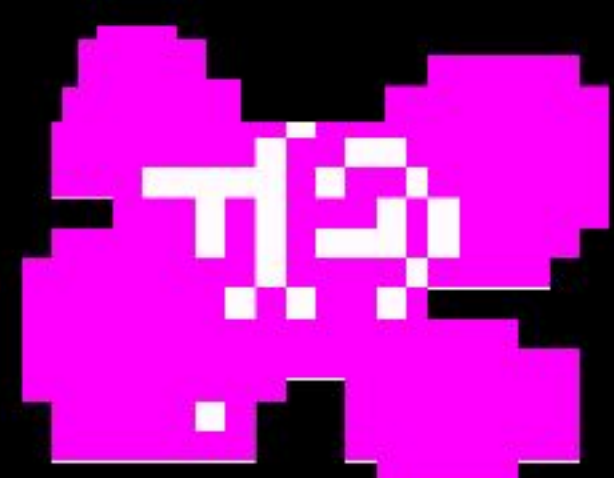


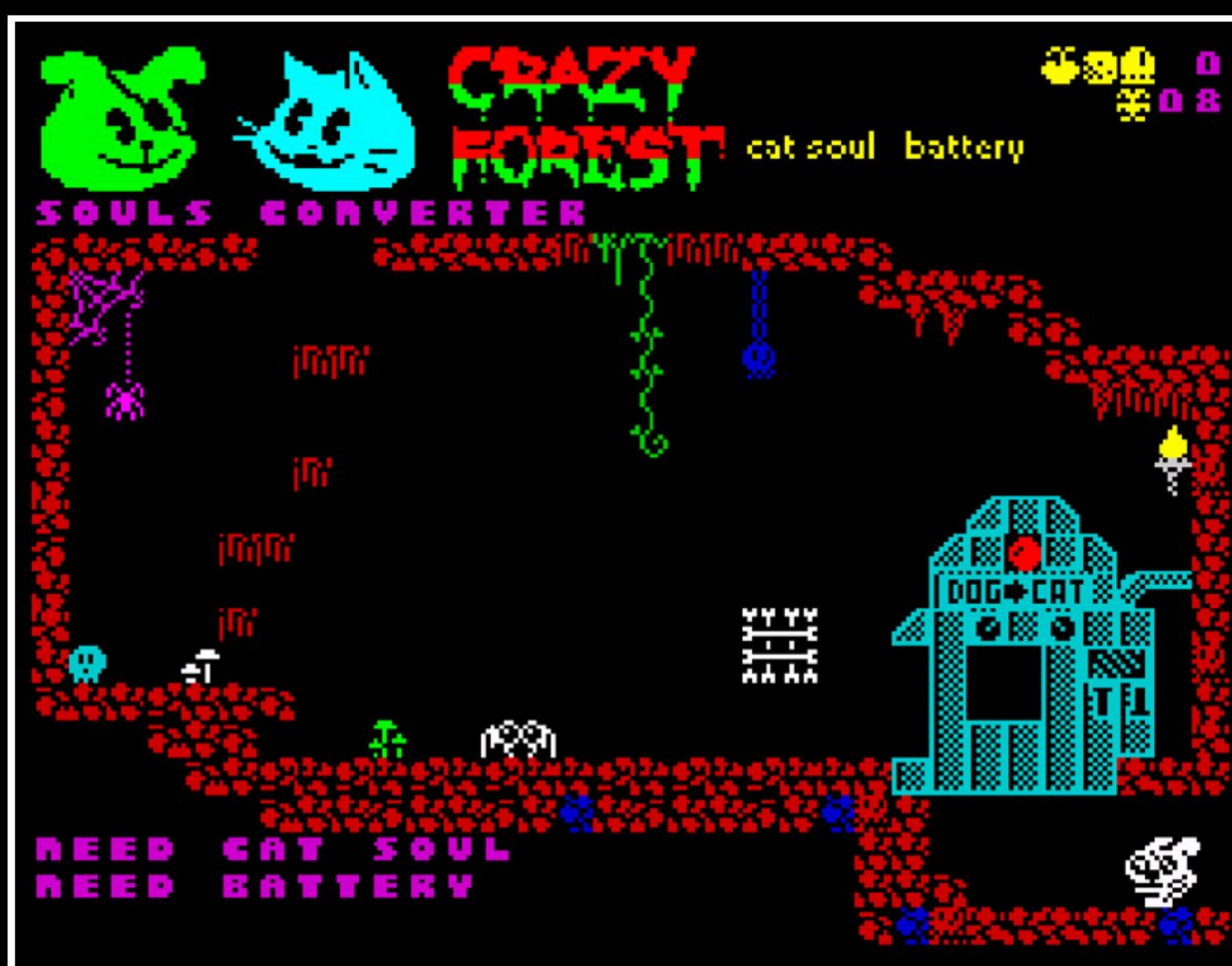
be killed by a cat... with Agatha no longer with us, this could well be a problem. Waldo heads into the forest undeterred, and as he makes his way a little deeper inside, he encounters Agatha's ghost, who informs him that her spirit lies inside a bottle in the realms of the coldest part of the forest. Also deep in the caves of the forest is a soul-converting machine; unfortunately, this is broken and requires power to get working again. Waldo has an idea - if he can find Agatha's spirit and a power source, he can convert himself into Agatha, take on the evil hordes, destroy the Thulhu, and bring peace to the forest once more. We're counting on you, Waldo!

Criticism



It took me a few attempts to get going on this one, with death seemingly lying around each corner, testing my patience to the max. Fortunately, after working out what I was meant to be doing, I became enthralled with what I was seeing. The game is beautifully designed, Waldo's sprite is rather cute - even the eyepatch - and the animation as he runs across the screen is very well done. The same can also be said for the other creatures; the details give them an extra creepy feel - the spider skeletons give the expected creeps one would expect. The screens are well-detailed, with several pitfalls awaiting you in each room. The rooms are bright, colourful, and very easy on the eye. The gameplay is consistently high as you navigate traps, platforms, water, conveyor belts, and many, many types of enemies that require avoidance. With Waldo lacking any type of firepower (that is saved





for Agatha) he has to make do with avoiding anything deadly, meaning that jumps and runs have to be timed perfectly to make it past most screens.

The more of this world I explored, the more I fell in love with it. There are many different areas of the forest to explore, from the main woodland to the caves, the streams, and then the ice buildings. The further you go, the more interesting the creatures and puzzles get, keeping you gripped and pulling you into its world. The urge to keep on playing to progress is huge. Such an accomplished and complete game - definitely worthy of the £1 purchase price - hell, I'd be happy to pay a lot more.

- Paul Davies





Waldo

Agatha



Comments

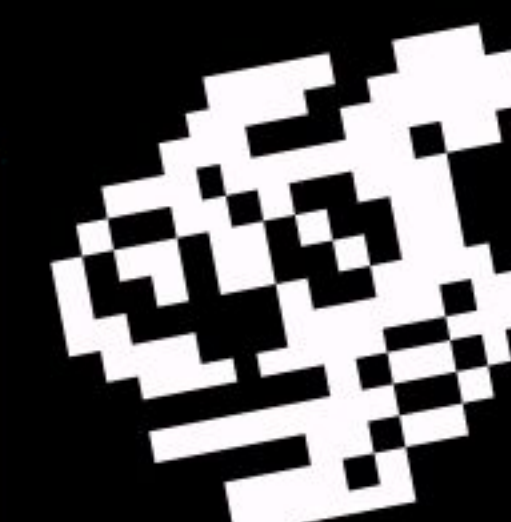
With bright, detailed, and enthralling graphics, Daniel Isoba has delivered a great arcade puzzle adventure that will pull you into its world and you won't want to leave. Well, maybe not until you see that creepy spider skeleton. Argh!

Keyboard: Redefinable / QZOP
Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston

Use of Computer:	85%
Graphics:	90%
Playability:	89%
Getting started:	85%
Addictive Qualities:	89%
Overall:	90%

Gordon's Take

I'm with Paul on this one - on initial play, you are in the dark and unsure what to do with the game. You can't come into this assuming it's just another run-of-the-mill platformer as it walks to the rhythm of its own tune. The more you play, the more you discover things and understand what to do with the puzzles presented in front of you. It's well-constructed, utterly enchanting, and genuinely surprising. I came in expecting an ACME platformer but left satisfied, having played something just a little different within the genre.



Nick Robert's **PLAYING TIPS**



So here I am, 36 years on from the first words I wrote for Crash, and I still get the thrill of discovering new Oliver Frey drawings that I have never seen before! He was such a prolific artist in the early days of Crash – sketching images of games to fill gaps in the pages. It's what set Crash apart from Unclear User and Sour Sinclair. Today we celebrate an Oli 3D Ant Attack sketch from an old Crash mail order catalogue. Amazing work Oli!

BRIAN BLOODAXE HINTS & TIPS

Programmed by Charles Bystram and published by The Edge back in 1985, *Brian Bloodaxe* was like a hardcore *Manic Miner* with horns! Tips incoming...

- Charles was obviously a big Monty Python fan, with a version of the theme running on the title screen and throughout the game. Yes, it will drive you nuts!

- Pixel perfect jumps are the order of the day once again here, although you'll find that Brian can walk across some quite large gaps as he's a big chunky sprite.
- The hero can pick up bombs, keys and detonators to help in his quest. He can only carry three items at once though, so some careful object swapping is needed.
- The keys will open the portcullis doors of the same colour.
- Don't fret when you see the giant

seamonster – you can actually leap onto its head to get yourself across the big chasm.

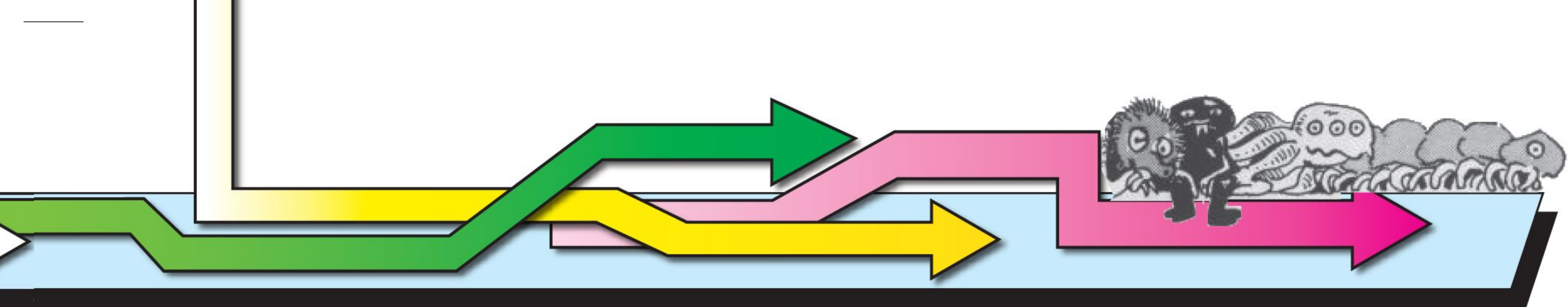
- Like the keys, the detonators and bombs are also colour coded.



Drop a blue bomb near something you'd like blown up, then select the blue detonator to blow it up!

- Unlike the *Miner Willy* games, here you can actually drop objects to allow yourself access to higher platforms. This makes each level less of a platform puzzle and more of an object manipulation puzzle.
- The other difference to *Willy* is that Brian has an energy bar, so you can dash past enemies, as long as it doesn't hit zero! No insta-death in this game!





3D ANT ATTACK!

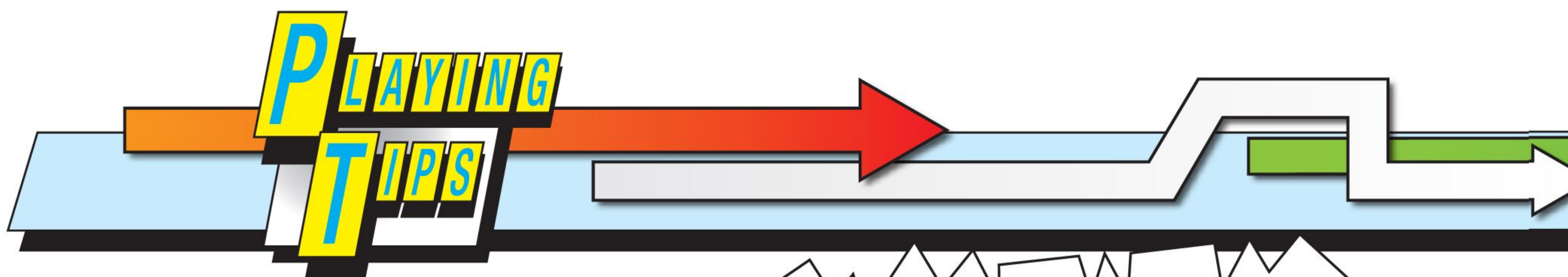
Can you believe it? A 3D game, on a Speccy, as far back as 1983! Here are some top tips on splatting those pesky ants!

- When attempting to rescue 8+ people the most dangerous thing you can do is follow the scanner exactly as this leads you through the city where you're most likely to run into difficulties. A good method is: first of all, walk to the extreme left or right wall of the city (bearing the scanner in mind) and walk along that wall until your scanner turns red. As you are on the wall you can move either left or right until you reach

the person. With this method you can rescue 8 or more every game – and you automatically finish the game if you get to 10!

- After rescuing 9 people, if you search the buildings you will find a box of ammo. Also, if you have the girl (or boy) and you're at the other end of the city – do this... Near the wall structure, face the girl in front of you at the hole. Jump forward or go forward pressing jump and you will jump through the hole. Then just sit back and watch the girl jump on an ant, she will also jump through the hole – yet another one saved!





TOP GUN

A big Ocean Software license from 1997 was Tom Cruise's *Top Gun*. Shoot more jets down with these lives POKEs...

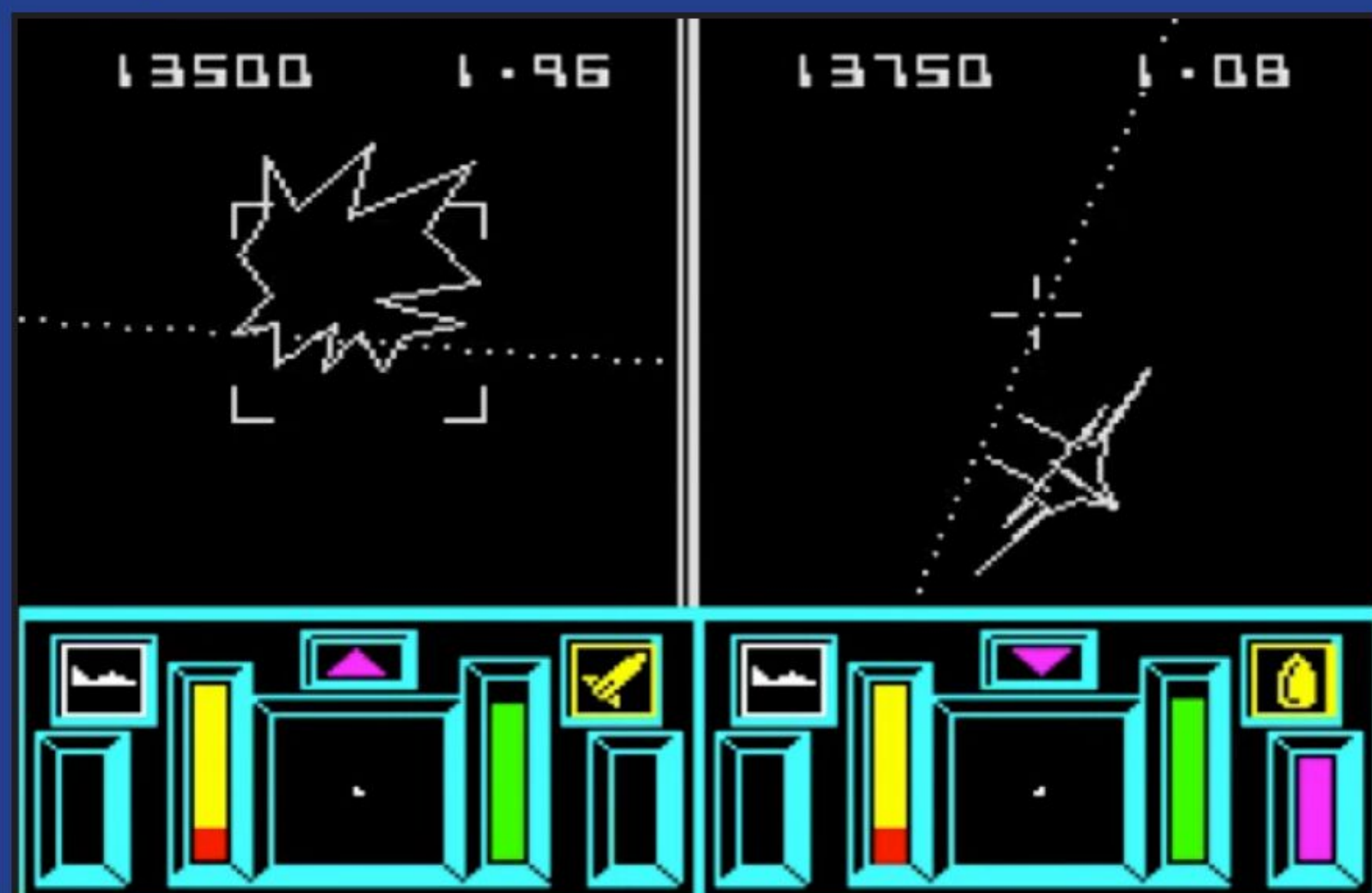
Type in the listing here for infinite lives, or if you have a

Multiface, use these POKEs instead...

POKE 26460,0

To choose the number of lives in 2 player use...

POKE 27727,n
POKE 27728,n



```

5  REM FIRST PRINTED IN CRASH ISSUE
   54, JULY 1988
10  CLEAR 65533: LET T=0
20  PRINT AT 10,4;"POKES BY CAIRNPOKE
   (C)1987": FOR F=23296 TO 23425
30  READ A: POKE F,A: LET T=T+(F-23296)*A:
   NEXT F
40  IF T<>292366 THEN PRINT "ERROR IN
   DATA, CHUM!": STOP
50  RANDOMIZE USR 23296
60  DATA 221, 33, 203, 92, 17
70  DATA 234, 6, 62, 255, 55
80  DATA 205, 86, 5, 48, 241
90  DATA 62, 224, 50, 8, 95
100 DATA 49, 252, 255, 14, 112
110 DATA 33, 8, 98, 229, 33
120 DATA 252, 94, 17, 192, 99
130 DATA 217, 1, 224, 184, 217
140 DATA 118, 201, 33, 145, 252
150 DATA 1, 76, 0, 17, 145
160 DATA 64, 122, 237, 176, 50
170 DATA 182, 64, 50, 170, 64
180 DATA 50, 174, 64, 50, 202
190 DATA 64, 62, 201, 18, 62
200 DATA 252, 50, 110, 252, 62
210 DATA 145, 50, 113, 252, 62
220 DATA 17, 78, 252, 1, 8
230 DATA 0, 237, 176, 33, 78
240 DATA 252, 34, 66, 255, 195
250 DATA 243, 254, 175, 5, 50, 92
260 DATA 103, 195, 168, 97, 128
270 DATA 223, 161, 209, 177, 144
280 DATA 141, 139, 151, 205, 198
290 DATA 199, 200, 195, 163, 255

```



GARFIELD SOLUTION

In 1988 *Garfield* had a *Big, Fat, Hairy Deal*, and we had the complete solution...

- Go right until Garfield falls down a hole.
- Walk to the far left of the chest and



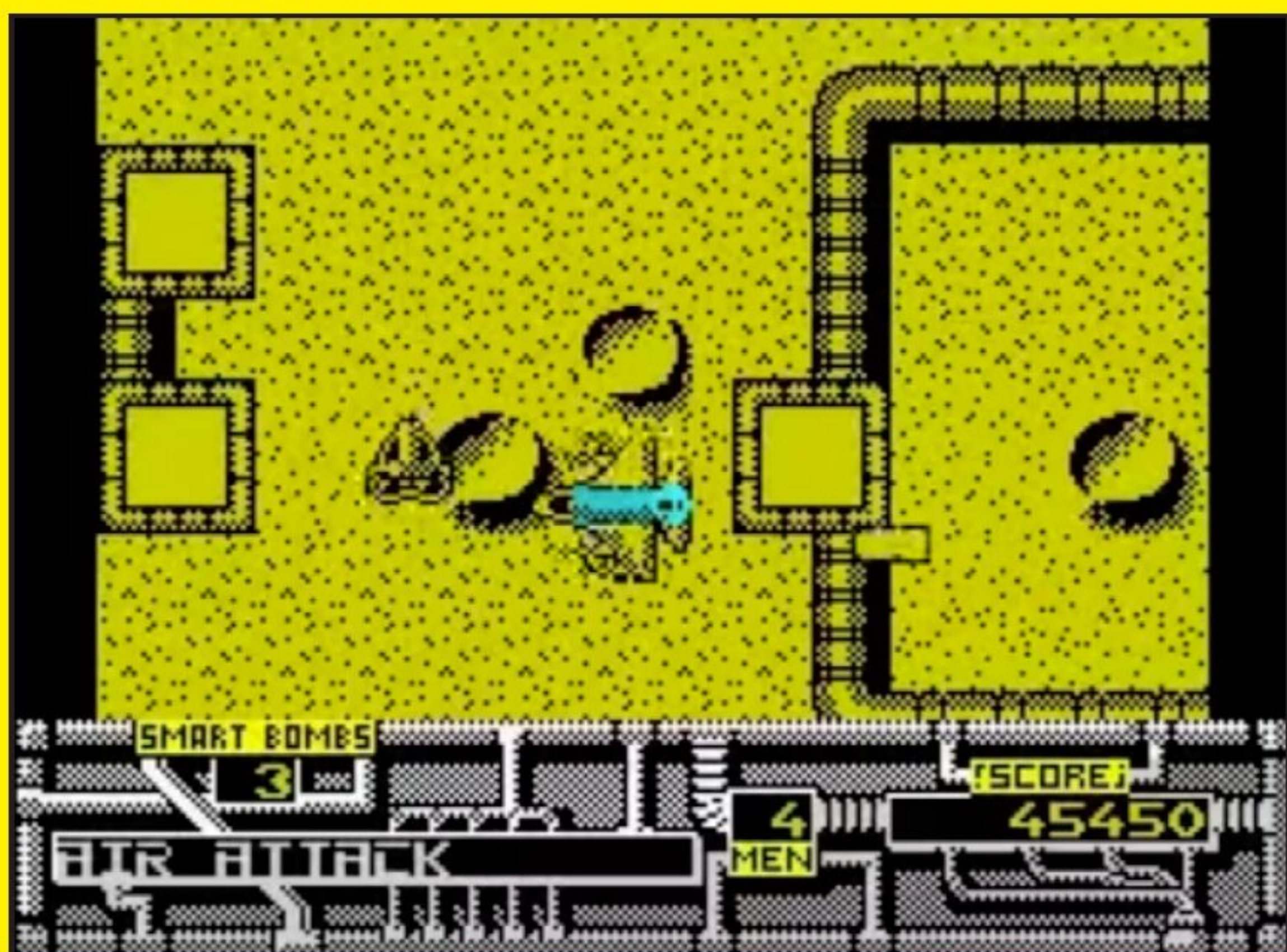
- kick it. Quickly pick up the key before the rat eats it!
- Go to the park and drop the key.
- Go to the shed and pick up the spade.
- Go to the hardware shop and use the spade. Then pick up the money.
- Go to the healthy food shop. Drop the money and some seeds will appear. Pick up the seeds.
- Go to the park

- and drop the seeds, then pick up the key. Afterwards, jump up at the bird.
- When in the room where the bird left you, go up. Then go right to meet Arlene.
- If you are about to have a snack attack, drop essential items, pick up any object not needed and eat it!
- If you're about to go to sleep take a drink of Jon's coffee to wake up!

MARAUDER CHEATS!

A top game from Hewson way back in June 1988, *Marauder* scored a 90% Crash Smash in issue 55. I seem to remember our readers being really quick off the mark with some top tips!

- At the beginning of the first level, get two extra lives by shooting the beacons when they're cyan coloured, then get another life on the next beacon and kill yourself. Now you will have two more lives than you started with. Keep doing this and you can get millions and trillions of lives! (Well, at least 255 lives – Ed).
- The second tip is for level 3: as soon as you start, go to the right, not forgetting to split the aliens behind you! Continue until you get to the main part of the level. At the end make sure you collect shields from the beacon, but don't waste time. Shoot with all your might and you will soon make it to level 4!
- The order of the day in *Marauder* is to be fast and frenetic. It's a blaster game – if you whizz past something and didn't shoot it – forget it! Just keep on going forwards at all times.
- Shooting diagonally we found to be a good strategy – picking off the gun turrets one at a time.



WIZARD'S LAIR

Riffing on the success of *Ultimate's Atic Atac* and *Sabre Wulf* came *Bubble Bus* with *Wizard's Lair* in 1985...

- When using the magic lift, levels can be reached by typing in:
HAWLO
CAIVE
VAULT
LLAYR
DUNGN
CRYPT
- The flashing cups that appear throughout the game give an extra life each and the flashing helmets give you limited protection from knights and the hooden axe men.

The crosses allow you through snakes that are the same colour as the cross.

- Hidden doors may be found in between knights in fireplaces or in rocks.
- There are a few cabinets with doors in them.
- Also, when entering a room, keep your eyes open for monsters moving through walls – this is a sure sign of a secret door!



Have you got any playing tips, cheats or POKes to share? Email Nick at: tips@crashmagazine.co.uk

SAVAGE PRINCESS 2



Monsters Legs Productions

£ 12.00 • 11/2023 • 48K / 128K

DOWNLOAD: <https://on.mom/gspL>

Physical edition available from Bitmap Books with a digital release to follow soon after.

Waking up from a peaceful sleep is one thing, but being woken up prematurely after a night on the lash and with the mother of all hangovers is quite another. This is the situation in which the world's most violent video game princess has found herself. The fury burning within her will consume her if she doesn't take it out on the one responsible for this untimely cacophony. Woe betide that person - oh wait, it's Cthulhu, the malevolent and terrifyingly ancient Old One. But the princess

doesn't care - her sleep was disrupted, and hell hath no fury. If you've played the original, you will be instantly ready to play this delightful sequel. In this second instalment, you will see that she has been taking swordsmanship lessons and is pretty deft with a sabre. Straight from the outset, this wieldy weapon changes how you go about this platforming adventure. This is no longer about jumping



ocean. Before she can set sail, she must locate coins/tokens that spell out the word LALDY - this gives her the special ability to "Gie Cthulhu Laldy" as the Scottish colloquial term for giving something or someone a thrashing would say. Collecting these items has the princess travelling over three different stages before her final battle with the soon-to-not-be-immortal being.



over baddies to avoid them - this is a full-on battle against the hordes of Cthulhu. In order to reach this demigod's lair, the princess will need to procure a boat to sail across the

Paul's Take

I enjoyed the original *Savage Princess* game but thought it lacked in a few areas - it ran a little slow, was very quiet, and was in need of a bit of excitement. I'm happy to report all of these grievances have been addressed here in its sequel. As Gordon points out, it can seem to plod a little slowly but this is more than made up for by the rest of the game. Fun, quirky, challenging, and who can resist a good teabagging? Not I!



Criticism

The game exudes charm and comicism right from the outset. Just refrain from pressing any buttons at the start to avoid waking up the princess, and you'll understand what I mean. Even the featured ability of 'T-bagging' fallen enemies hilariously infuriates their friends. It's evident that *Savage Princess 2* has been crafted with a cheeky sense of humour. That's not to say it lacks passion, though - each stage has been designed incredibly well, and all the details of the sprite work are commendable. Ultimately, a lot of creativity and effort went into crafting this sequel. Additionally, there are new features that weren't present in the original: infinite lives (with a death counter), the aforementioned 'T-bagging' feature inspired by the Counter-Strike fallen victim taunt, and the ability to access buildings and deflect projectiles with your sword. As alluded to, the game is divided into three segments



that depict Ava's journey towards Cthulhu. This journey is illustrated with a neat little overworld map, reminiscent of *Ghosts 'n Goblins*. This game is much more complete and realised than its predecessor, making it all the better for it. If there is any negative criticism, it would just be that the game plods at an ever-so-slightly sluggish pace - but that doesn't negate the enjoyment to be had.

- Gordon King



Comments

Keezes has returned with a very worthy sequel that improves upon the original and makes the game stand out in a sea of many platformers. The inclusion of music (for 128K users) adds an extra layer of atmosphere to an already enjoyable game. It's a little short and quickly completable once you get used to the game's mechanics. But it's very much worth your time.

Keyboard: Redefinable

Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston

Use of Computer:	85%
Graphics:	89%
Playability:	87%
Getting started:	80%
Addictive Qualities:	85%

Overall: 83%



Simon Butler's

SCREEN\$

Just when I get myself motivated to push some pixels on a secret project with tons of ideas regarding what needs to be done, Big Daddy Wilkins chimes in, demanding Spectrum reviews post haste. I sit myself down, choose some quality Spectrum artwork, and then Michael Flash Ware pipes up with urgent requests for artwork revisions

for Head Over Heels on the Next. One thing leads to another, and here we are twenty-four hours later where I can finally open the doors to the Gallery. Such is life.

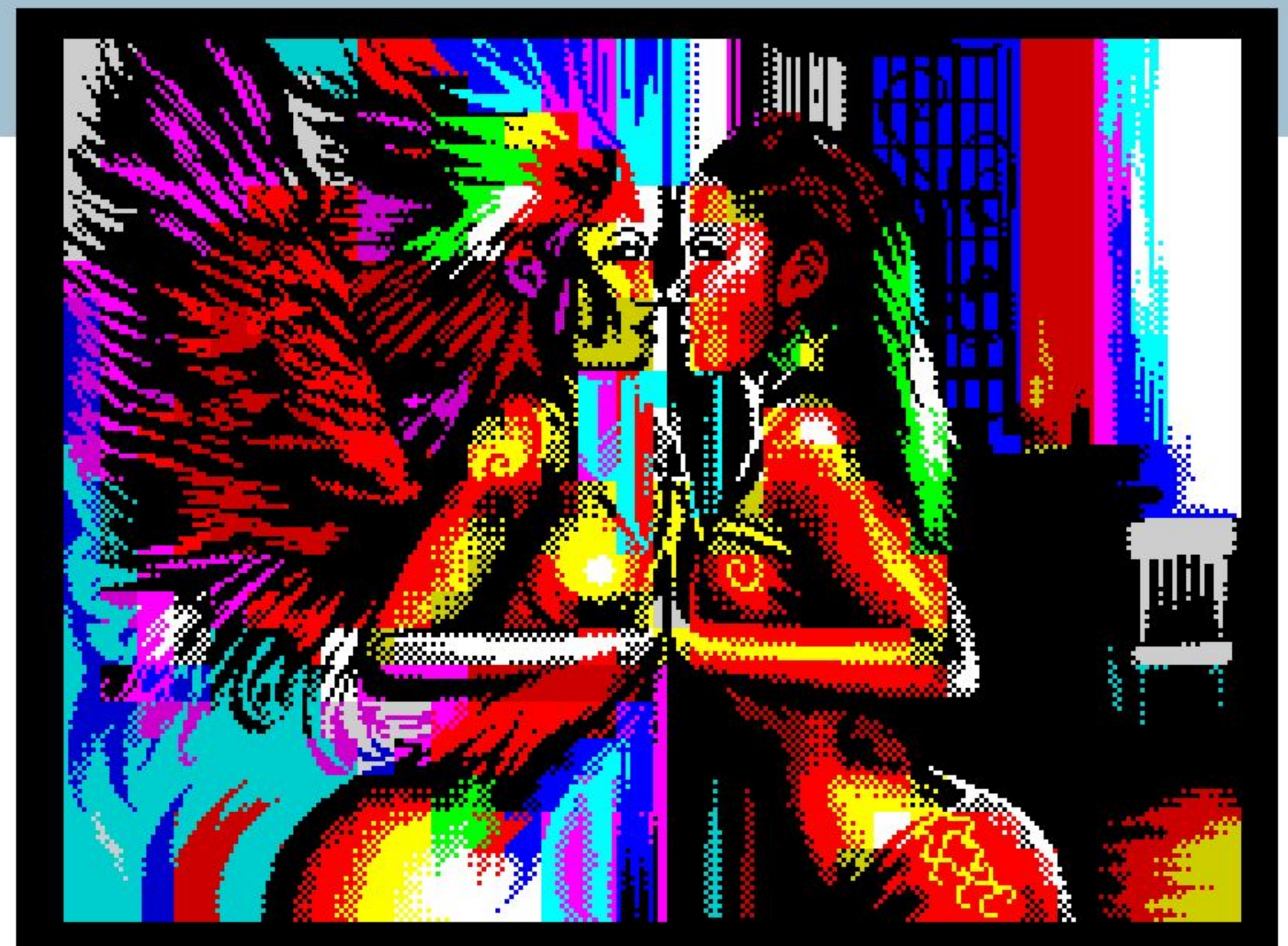
So, let's dip our toes into the pixelated depths and see what treasures are on display.

Mirror, Mirror by Diver 2021

Diver aka Aleksey is a regular contributor to our virtual wall space, and his creations cover a wide array of topics and genres. This, for me at least, harks back to the 80s with people like Boris Vallejo being front and centre in popular fantasy art.

Here we have what could have been a simple mirrored image, slightly rejigged, but not when Diver is in control. The two women, while incredibly similar, have been superbly drawn to take great individual advantage of the infamously tricky attributes. Their faces are entirely dissimilar, as is their attire, and so subtle are the differences in their anatomy that it is obvious that we're in the presence of a master of his craft.

There is a yearning in the eyes of both women, yet the avian creature to the left has a stoic gaze while the eyes of her mirrored counterpart burn with a smouldering ferocity. Great detail and the superb colour control we have come to expect all combine to make an amazing image for our first submission.

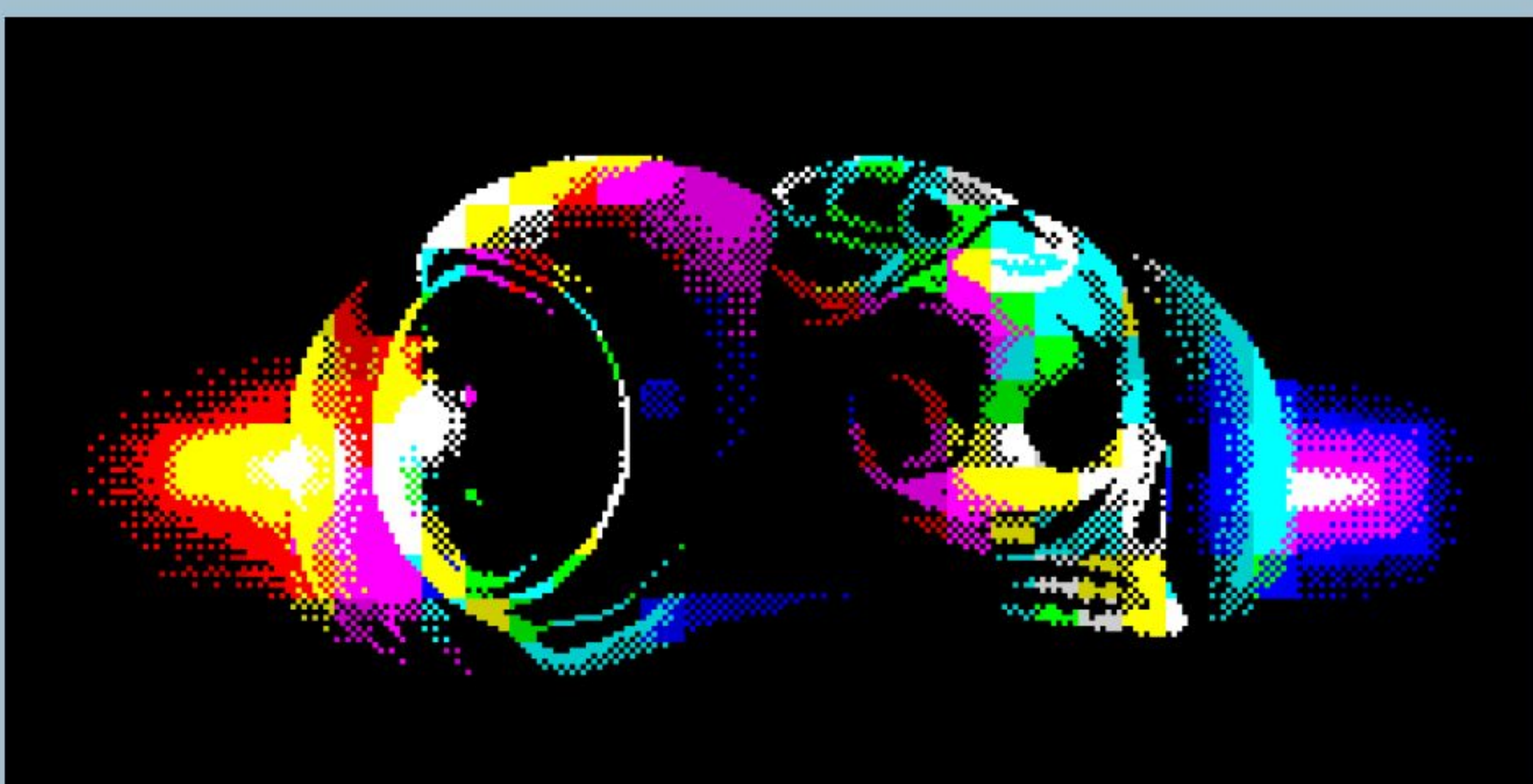


Duality by Kubikami 2017

Always a fan of "less is more", and this mournful image nails that mantra perfectly.

The astronaut's helmet contrasted with the alien skull, both set against perhaps their home worlds, gives this image a movie poster feel. It brings to mind Enemy Mine from 1985 without being in any way similar in any of the designs.

The attributes are cleverly hidden, and the whole piece has a quiet power about it, with the radiant energies pulling outwards from the central shapes. The reflections of the tiny planets in the faceplate of the helmet are superb, as is the metallic headpiece on the skull. A smashing image from an artist I plan to keep my eye on in the future.



All this artwork and much more
can be viewed at www.zxart.ee

Metal Exile by Adam 2023

Adam may have graced these pages before today, but this little gem only recently appeared on my radar, and while I usually avoid title pages, I just couldn't resist.

A lone soldier with the odds stacked against him. A horde of alien unpleasantness on all sides, crafted wonderfully to display them in their grotesque splendour.

The colours leap from the screen as the pit before our brave warrior boils and bubbles while a jade-eyed monstrosity rises from the seething lava.

The creatures are weird and obscene and crafted to perfection, and the soldier is detailed to a tee, his armour filled with all manner of hi-tech doodads and whatnots.

It's a terrible vista, masterfully plotted.



Forest Escape by Craig Stevenson 2023

It was mere days ago that I stumbled across this and to say I was impressed doesn't do it justice.

The complexity of the image, with the writing vines wrapped around the supremely crafted knight, is just amazing. Throw the masterly use of colour into the mix, and it's a stone-cold fact that this is one of the finest pieces it has been my privilege to put before you.

The text is bold and simple yet balanced perfectly by the delicate scrollwork below.

This is one for the ages; one for fanboys to hang on their walls and pore over adoringly.

Genius!



SUPER COBRA



Cronomantic

£ FREE • 09/2023 • 48K

DOWNLOAD: <https://on.mom/TFge>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, before home microcomputers captured the imaginations of every schoolkid in the country, there existed a transitional era. During this time, for those who couldn't

afford the Atari 2600, arcade gaming cravings at home were satisfied by VFD tabletop electronic devices. There were numerous options to select from, with some drawing inspiration from arcade classics like

Space Invaders and *Pacman*, while others stood out with their originality. *Super Cobra* falls into the former category, licensed from Konami's shooter of the same name. This Spectrum conversion strives

to capture the spirit of that thrilling and often overlooked era in electronic gaming. For those who don't know, *Super Cobra* is a *Scramble* sequel - so you have, in essence, a *Scramble*-like clone for your home computer, all done in a way that makes it look like you're playing it on a VFD device. It has everything in the original: missiles that launch, fuel tanks, and obstacles to avoid - all in a scrolling landscape. It's a matter of avoiding things and achieving the highest score possible.



Paul's Take

I like the idea of these types of games - simple, effective, and they bring back a lot of memories. As we saw in issue 17 with the *Mario Game and Watch* release, these are usually done really well too, and the same can be said for *Super Cobra*. Although based on the old handheld game, this is also somewhat reminiscent of very early Spectrum games, leaving the Speccy the perfect format for this one. Authentic and fun though don't expect to be playing this for much longer than a few quick blasts.



Criticism

It's fair to say you're entering a game that has rather limited capabilities. The game does its best to recreate the experience of playing on one of these vintage devices. I recommend trying it out on a

CRT TV with your Spectrum, as the bloom effect adds to the authenticity. It does what it says on the tin and offers a glimpse into this pre-micro era of electronic gaming. While it may be a relatively brief experience, I'm delighted that it exists. Since it's written in BASIC or a form of compiled

BASIC, it does exhibit some latency, which adds to its authenticity, just like the original device. It's even more impressive that it's coded in such a rudimentary language. Right, where have my D-Cell Eveready batteries gone?

- Gordon King

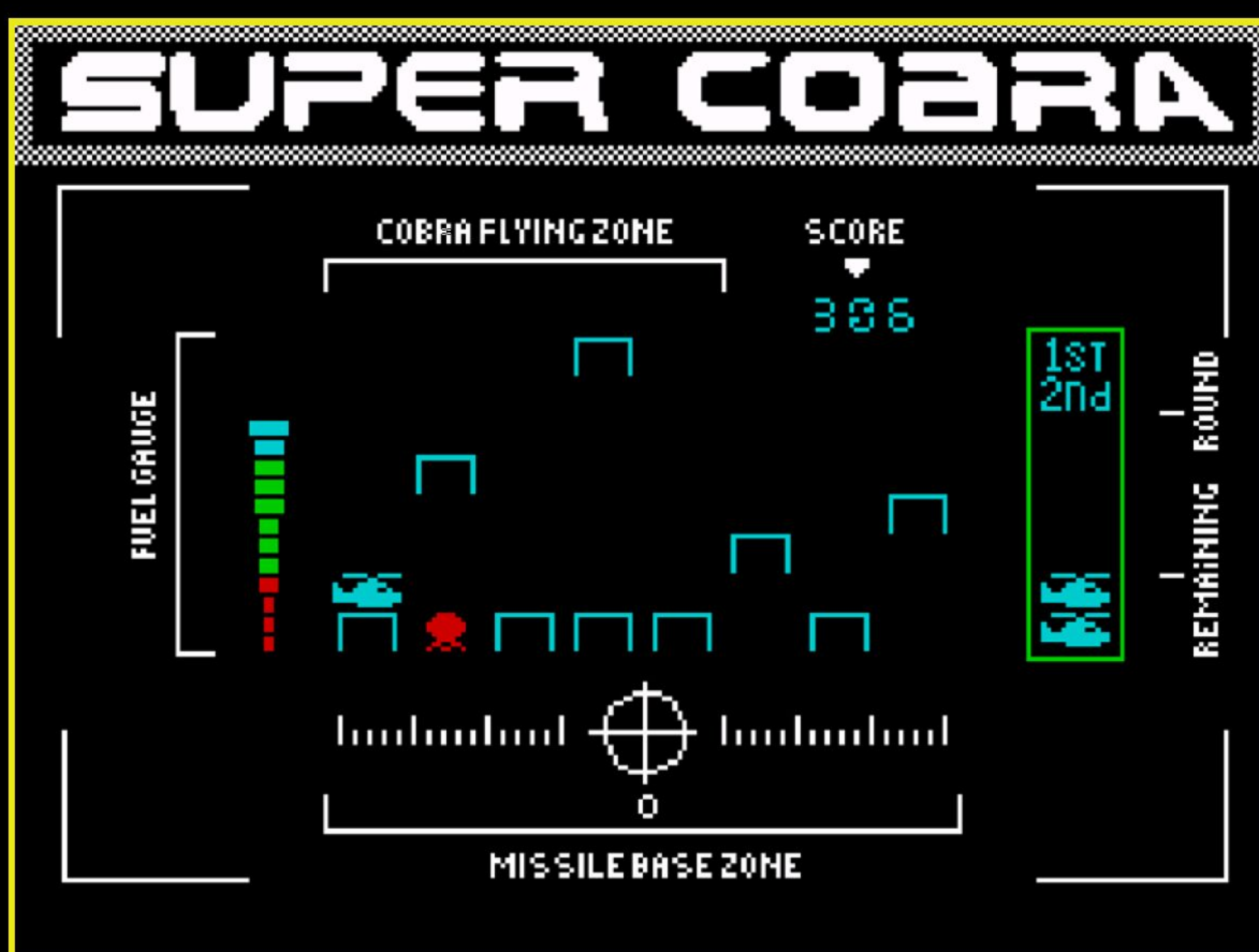
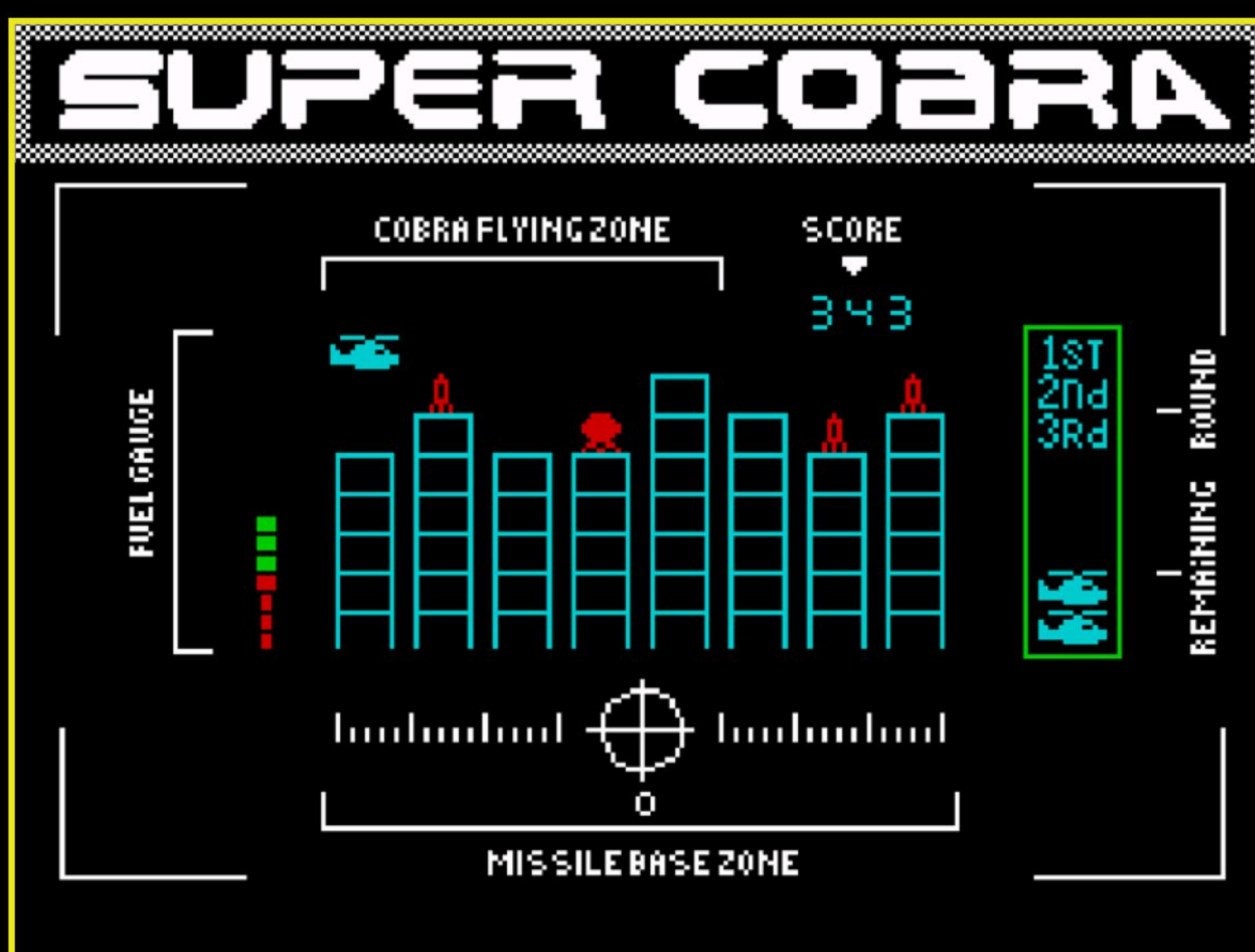


Comments

This is the closest you can come to an accurate simulation of a classic handheld game. The graphics and the authentic, sharp sound effects immerse you in the experience, making it feel like you're playing the genuine article. While it may become monotonous after a while, it's perfect for those quick high-score challenges with a sibling - reminiscent of the good old days. Super Cobra was an entrant in the Bytemaniacos BASIC 2023 Contest.

Keyboard: Redefinable
Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston

Use of Computer:	78%
Graphics:	68%
Playability:	68%
Getting started:	76%
Addictive Qualities:	68%
Overall:	69%



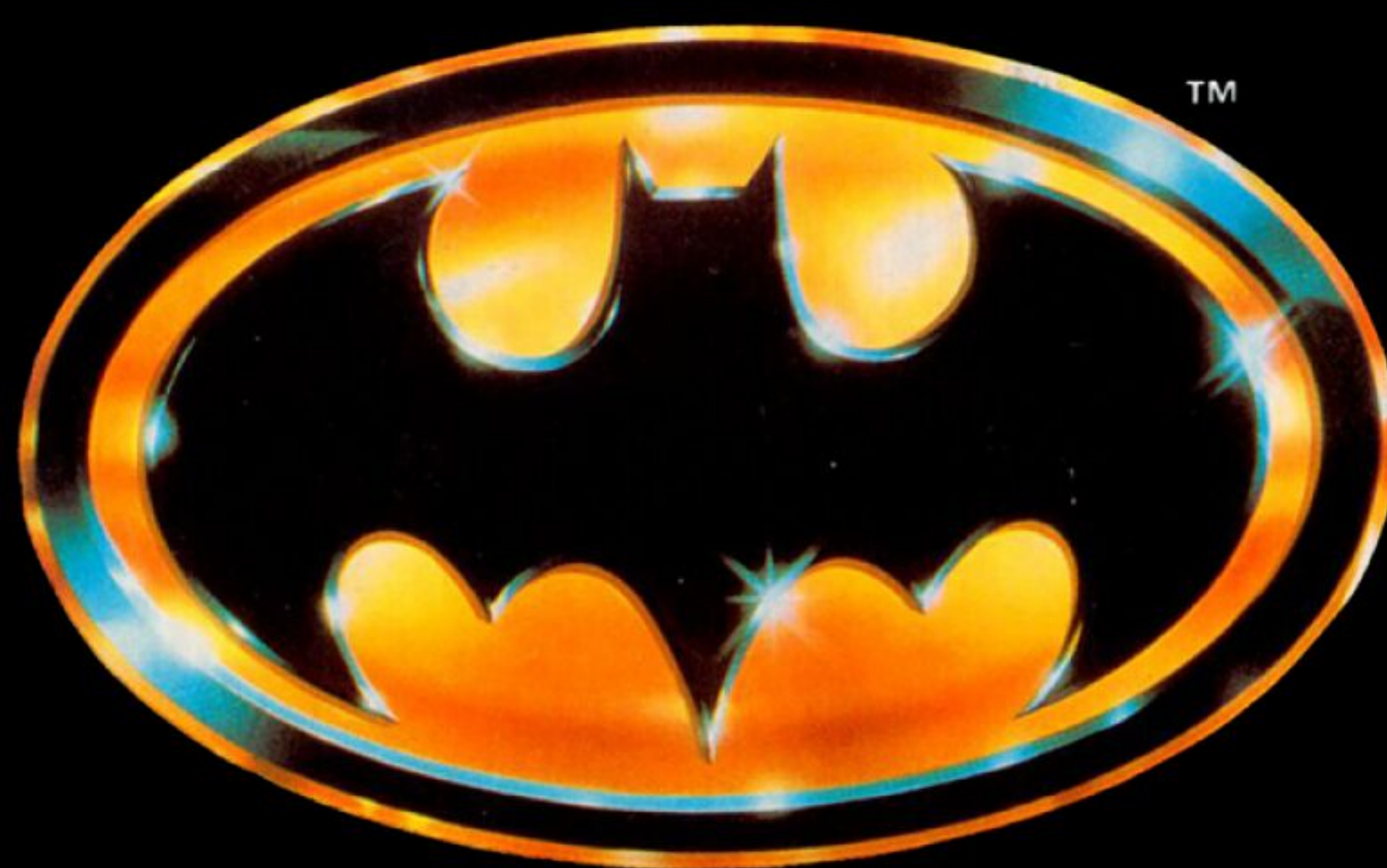


Few movies came as hyped as Batman in 1989. Starring Michael Keaton as the titular bat and a gloriously over-the-top Jack Nicholson as his nemesis, The Joker, Batman The Movie was a huge money-spinner for Warner Bros. Wanting a piece of the action, Ocean acquired the licence, bringing Dark Knight fever to the pages of Crash. Here's the story of Batman The Movie via the pages of the world's greatest Spectrum magazine.



THE GAME

Ocean's tried and tested movie adaptation formula was well-honed by 1989, thanks to games such as *RoboCop* and *Platoon*. Batman follows the movie's plot closely as the Caped Crusader battles against The Joker and his minions across a series of diverse levels. Starting at Axis Chemicals, Batman swings across the factory before instigating the very creation of the uber-villain by taking down the naughty Jack Napier. Then it's a high-speed chase across Gotham in the Batmobile, a brief visit to the Batcave to concoct an antidote to the Joker's vicious poison, before tackling the dozens of deadly Smilex-infused balloons hovering above the city in the Batwing. Finally, Batman faces off against The Joker inside Gotham Cathedral – can you defeat the hideously grinning villain before he wreaks terrible havoc on the city?



TM & © 1984 DC Comics Inc

PREVIEW & COMPO

News of Ocean's big Autumn release filtered through to Crash as early as issue 66 – four months before we saw the game itself. "On the case are Mike Lamb (batprogramming) and Dawn Drake (batgraphics)," noted our

on-the-spot reporter, Vicky Vale, AKA Rich Eddy. "All this, and an additional sub-game where Batman has to discover the antidote to the Joker's evil potion adds up to one helluvva batgame!" Alongside Rich's

enthusiastic words, we ran a little Bat-compo [Don't you start – Ed] with ten copies of the recent Batman graphic novel, *A Death In The Family*, up for grabs. All you had to do was answer the question, 'What is Batman's real name?'. Hmmm, tricky one that. I know – Clark Kent! Where's my prize? [You're fired – Ed]

The blazing summer sun means it's time for a look ahead to the seasons hot, hot, hot games. Unfortunately it's raining cats and dogs in Ludlow. Never mind... Richard 'undercover agent' Eddy takes an early look at Batman, Indiana Jones, Starglider II, Maze Mania and Austerlitz due for your Spectrum in the months to come. Jus' can't wait...

BATMAN

the movie

He's black, back... and he's bad. Ocean are back with a new Batman game — this time following the story of the movie. Quick! To the Batpreview!!

Black wings over Gotham City as the dark knight returns to the crime ridden streets to deal, once and for all, with the devilish Joker.

In the Ocean's new game of the movie, Batman is a far more vicious crime fighter than we've ever seen him before.

The game, due for release August 11 (hopefully), should reflect this in being action packed from start to finish, unlike the previous two puzzle orientated games.

On the case are Mike Lamb (batprogramming) and Dawn Drake (batgraphics). Both of them work in-house at Ocean and have previously worked on *RoboCop* and *Combat School* among many other titles.

Batman is split into four separate game levels, beginning in the Batmobile on the streets of Gotham City. Viewed from the side, Batman

er car in and out of the Gotham traffic tracking the Joker's van. A neat effect in this section is the violent swinging action of the Batmobile as it turns those sharp street corners. Smell the burning batrubber!

From the Batmobile it's onto the Batwing, a new batinvention, which is a form of a plane. The action is set high above the sprawling skyscrapers of Gotham — but even up here Batman can't escape the evil trickery of the Joker. The Joker sends up balloons inflated with deadly Smilex gas. If inhaled you die instantly with a huge smile on your face. Is there no end to the Joker's evil mind?

No! On to section three where Batman pursues the Joker in a chemical factory, where Smilex is made. Similar in style to the Drugs Factory section in *RoboCop*, Batman is equipped with the Batarang (a

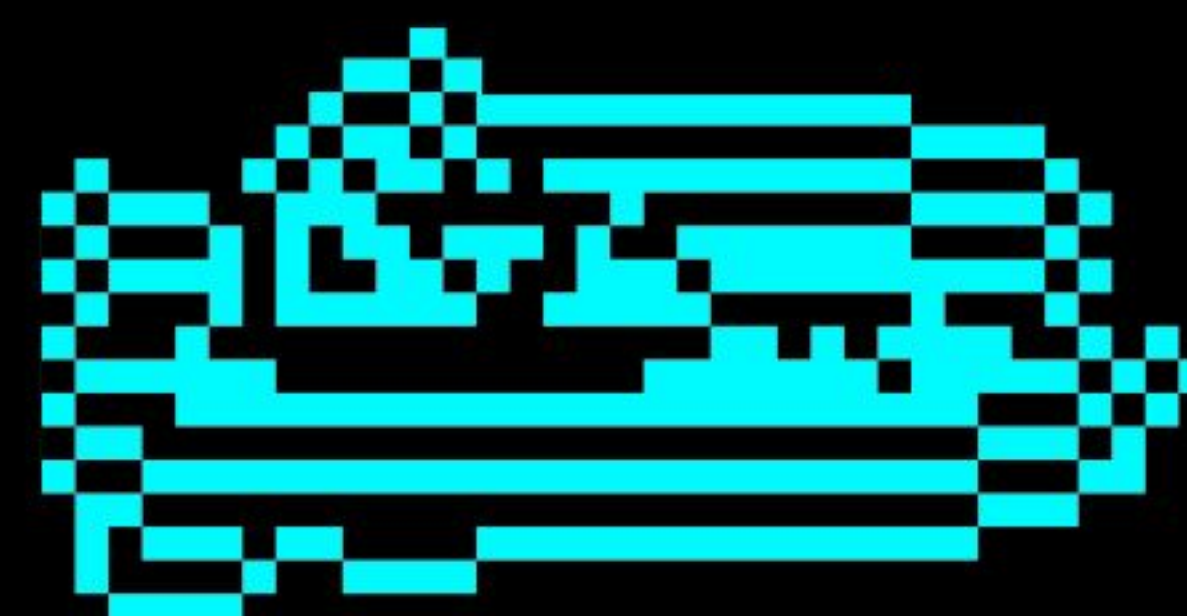
when thrown it grips the nearest solid object from which Batman can swing or hoist himself — as in *Bionic Commando*. The chase for the Joker continues into the fourth and final section which is centred around Gotham Church...

A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

I love Batman. I've stalked the dangerous streets of Gotham City with him and various incarnations of Robin (Dick Grayson) all my life from the comical US TV series, the appalling cartoon yech!, the DC comics, the disturbing *Dark Knight* books, to the film.

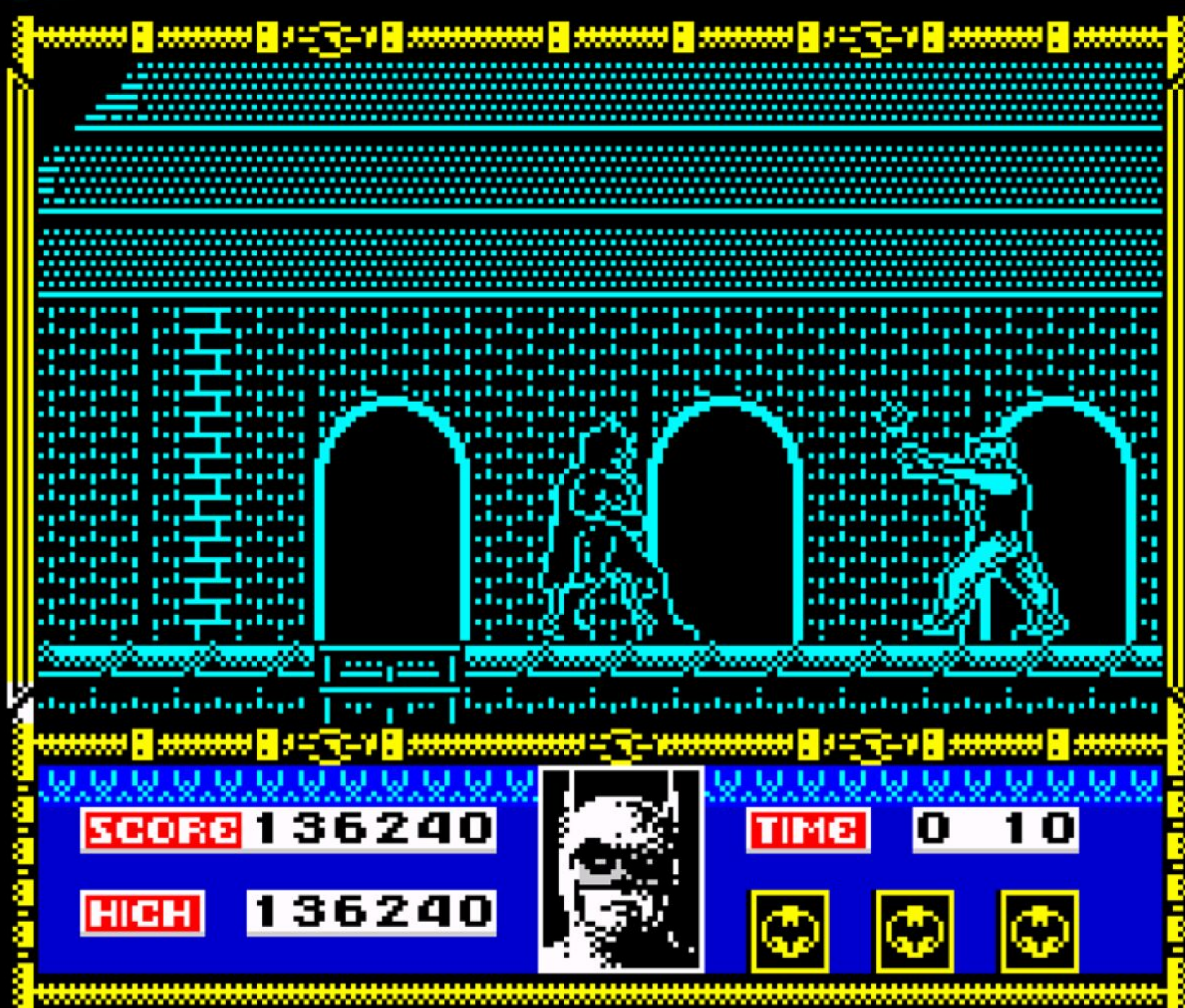
A Death In The Family (Titan Books, 2.50) is the most controversial compilation of DC Comics released. The four parts chronicle the death of the more recent Robin (Jason Todd — Dick left five years ago to set up Teen Titans, young superheroes).

Jason's death was decided on not by Jim Starlin, the author, but by Batman comic readers. At the end of *Batman* issue 427 Jason was caught in an violent explosion — the readers then had 36 hours to decide whether he should live or die, by way of a phone vote.



THE REVIEW

Issue 70, from November 1989, is when Crash went officially bat crazy – or should that be batty? “Oh I’ve got a live one here,” joked Nick Roberts before praising Batman’s graphics and playability. Nick’s fellow reviewer, Mark Caswell, went even further (literally – Nick couldn’t get past the first level) and called Ocean’s game ‘probably better than the film!’ Steady on there, Mark, and if there was any dissenting voice against Batman, it was its difficulty level. “My only quibble is that it’s a bit hard,” lamented Nick. “I’ve spent hours playing the game and haven’t even got past the first bit!” Maybe you should write in to CRASH’s resident tips expert, Nick? [Chortle – Ed]



THE VERDICT

“A brill and varied humdinger of a film tie-in. No joke!” was our pithy final comment to the *Batman The Movie* CRASH Smash. Presentation and Graphics scored 91%, Playability 92%, and Addictivity 93%. Only Sound, with 89%, failed to make the Nineties, but that didn’t stop the Ocean game from registering an imposing 93% overall score.

A brill and varied humdinger of a film tie-in. No joke!		RATING
PRESENTATION	91%	
GRAPHICS	91%	
SOUND	89%	
PLAYABILITY	92%	
ADDICTIVITY	93%	
OVERALL	93%	

THE MARKETING



BATMAN is a shadow in the darkness, as elusive as a dream. High above the seamy streets of GOTHAM, he is a criminal's nightmare. The only hope for a desperate city – BATMAN.

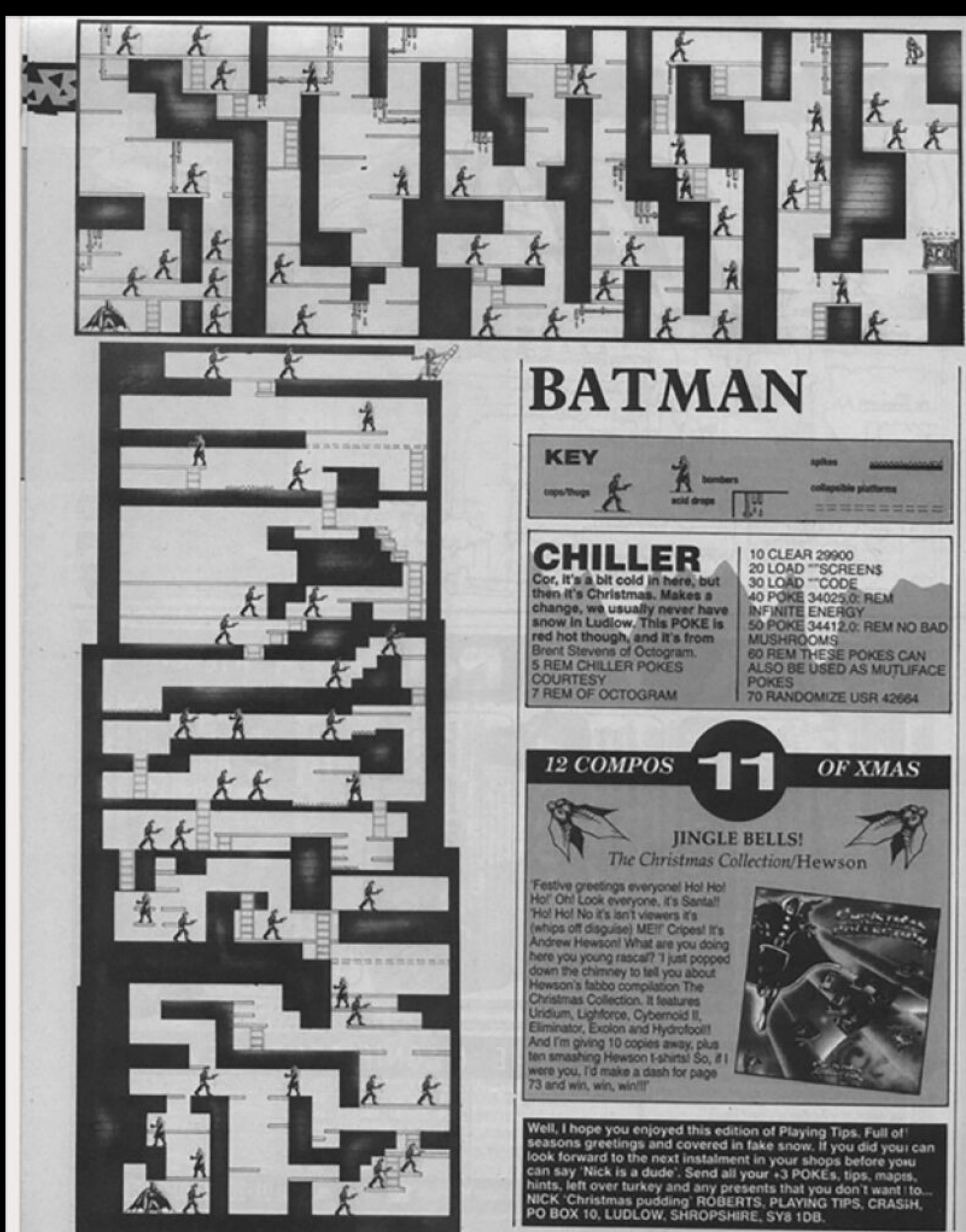
With our preview, review, competition, and poster, we almost did Ocean's job for it! That didn't, however, stop the Manchester software house from taking out a double-page

spread to advertise its new game in issue 70. After all, having undoubtedly spent a pretty penny acquiring the licence, what's a few more quid sent in Crash's direction?

QUICK TIPS, POKES & MAPS

A handful of Crash readers were keen to help their peers, judging by the tips section a month after the *Batman The Movie* review. Not only did we print a useful map of the first level (including details on the location of every one of those infernal steam pipes and acid spills) – there was also a solution to the same level

and some short tips for each subsequent section. Finally, Graham 'Turbo' Mason did the business again with a Pokemania program stuffed full of POKE-shaped hacks, including, yes, you guessed it, an infinite lives POKE for *Batman The Movie*!



READER AWARDS 1989 PT. 1

Issue 72 included the application form for our annual Readers' Awards, and the CRASH staff were on hand to give their tips for this year's ceremony. While *Batman* oddly failed to garner anyone's interest in the Best License [sic] (not coin-op) round, Nick proudly backed the Bat in the Best Game Overall category. But would the readers agree?



HOW THE STARS ARE VOTING!!



Call 'em stars? Hurmph! To give you some ideas this is how the CRASH team are voting... (except Corky, because he was away on polling day!)

BEST GAME OVERALL

Oli ■ *Operation Thunderbolt*. Loads of violence!
Nicko ■ *Batman!* Oh god! Everyone's going to say that!
Richard ■ Easy! The game I've been playing for weeks and weeks! *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts!* Yeah!

BEST COIN-OP CONVERSION

Oli ■ *New Zealand Story* was far too cute, I'm sticking with *Thunderbolt!* Oh. Hold on. *Silkworm* was excellent, the review under-rated it.

Nicko ■ Erm, ah, well. God! *New Zealand Story*, I think.

Richard ■ No problem. *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*.

BEST LICENSE (not coin-op)

Oli ■ *The Untouchables* - magic!

Nicko ■ *Indy*. Good game that.

Richard ■ *The*

Untouchables. Superbly produced and really playable, one of the years biggest surprises.

BEST ORIGINAL GAME

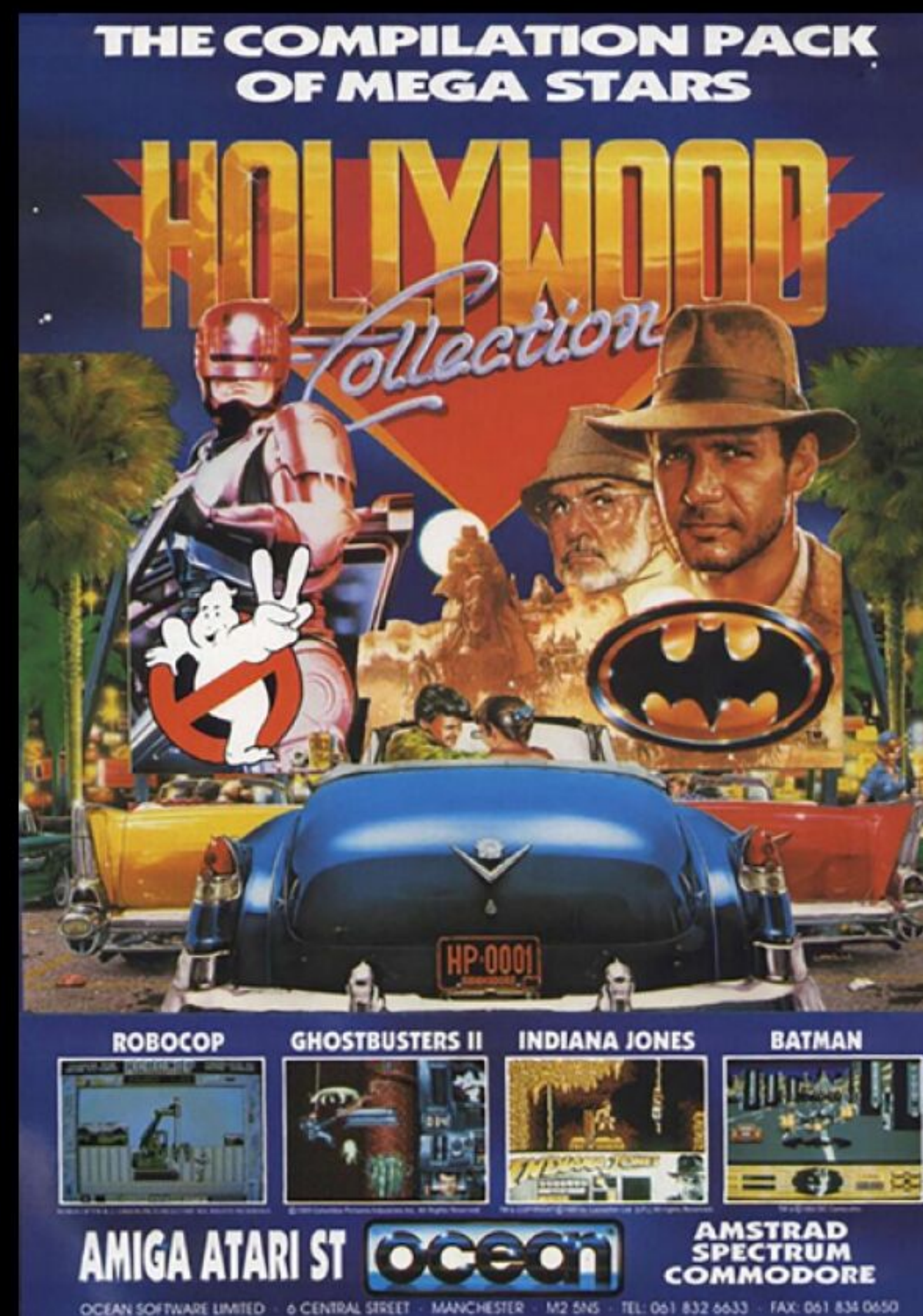
Oli ■ *Carrier Command* was a real achievement on the Speccy — the sort of game they said couldn't be done!

Nicko ■ *Purple Saturn Day*. Colourful, groovy graphics, heaps of playability.

Richard ■ Ooo, that little platform game. Thingy. Oh. Um. Dangerous. Yes! *Rick Dangerous*. Really good.

A COMPILATION REGULAR

Sadly, the games charts had disappeared by now, so there would be no consistent glory in the pages of CRASH for Ocean's third *Batman* game. However, It managed to sneak back into the mag as part of The Hollywood Collection, a solid compilation from Ocean that included fellow cinematic stars *Robocop*, *Indiana Jones*, and the *Ghostbusters*. This somewhat confusing advert mashed up all four movies over a Fifties-themed drive-in cinema and appeared in issue 81 of Crash.



READER AWARDS 1989 PT. 2

Three issues later, the results were in. While it disappointingly missed out in the Best License (not coin-op) round – albeit losing to fellow Ocean game, *The Untouchables* – *Batman The Movie* snared the coveted Best Game Overall award, beating out fellow Smashes *Hard Drivin'* and *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*.

● Best Overall Game

This is probably the most prestigious award for a software house to win. Past winners are regarded as classic games, the kind you return to time and time again without getting bored. Releases such as *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* and *Hard Drivin'* made 1989 another great year for Spectrum games. But for the second year running this category was dominated by Ocean. To announce the winner here's NickDJ Roberts — and girlfriend Julie.

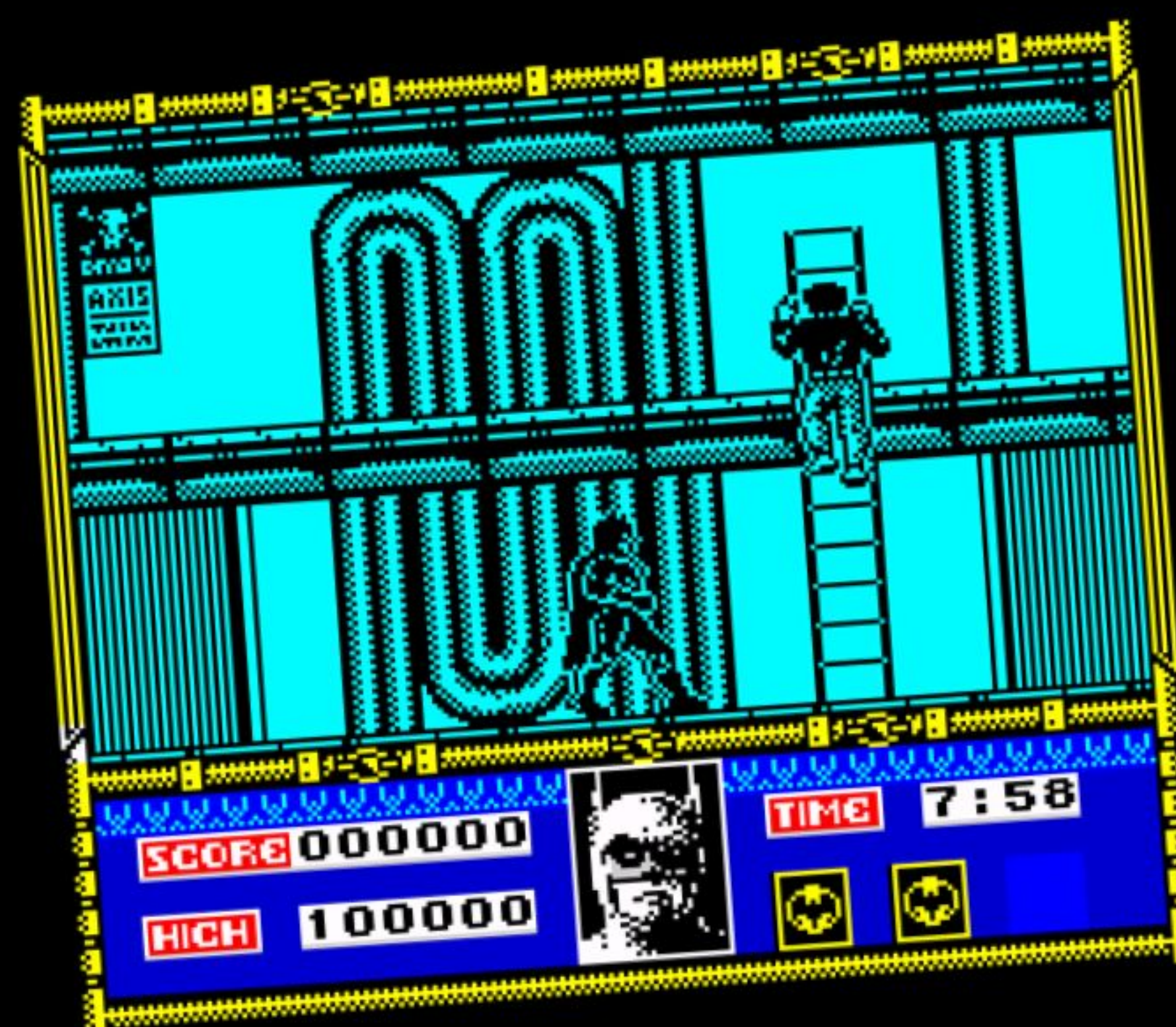
Julie: 'Oh Nick, you're so dreamy. Each month I cut out your picture from the top of the Playing Tips and stick it on my bedroom wall. All my friends are jealous of me. Oh Nick, you're wonderful.'

Nick: 'Choor, Julie you're not bad yerself. I'd do anything for ya, I'd even go to Boots (knowarrimean?). But keep yer hands off me for a minute, I've got to open this envelope and read out the — ouch! Gerroff! — Right then the winner of the Best Overall Game of 1989 is...(rips open envelope in a designed-to-impress-the-girlfriend manner) some Chinese game. Eh? Oops, sorry I'm holding the results paper upside down'.

Julie: 'Oh Nick you're so funny — and you've got a car (even though you've only insured it third party fire and theft and will probably write it off by the end of the week).'

Nick: 'I know what I'm doing — if I want to spend loads of money

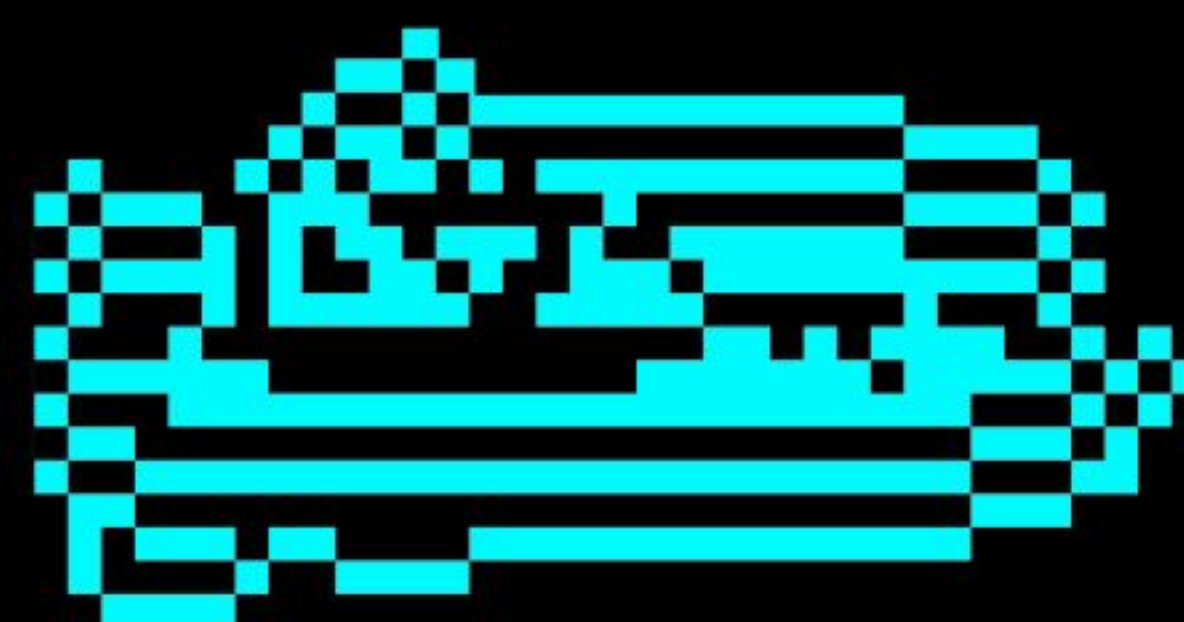
BATMAN



Final Thoughts

Ocean had great success with Batman games back in the Eighties. Jon Ritman's isometric original was nominally based on the camp Sixties TV show while 1988's *Batman The Caped Crusader* had its origin more in the comic, complete with speech bubbles and individual frames.

For many fans of the Bat, this adaptation of the smash hit movie remains their favourite: an exciting adventure that closely follows the plot of the film while flaunting the refined gameplay that made *Robocop* such a hit.



EXO-TICAL



Roolandoo

£ DONATION • 09/2023 • 48K / 128K

DOWNLOAD: <https://on.mom/JFcl>

Not content with merely causing environmental devastation on one Earth, humanity has reached the point of no return during their third attempt to colonise a new homeworld. The last hope lies in taming the treacherous planet known as *Exo-tical*, where an ancient civilisation has left behind an inexhaustible energy source. Acquiring it would elevate humanity beyond its technological limitations and negate the need for the endless cycle of exploiting a planet's natural resources. However, indigenous creatures inhabiting this tropical world, including the formidable behemoth guardians, present a challenge to uncovering *Exo-tical's* secrets. Only skilled fighter pilots operating small one-man crafts can navigate this seemingly impenetrable terrain. Fortunately, they have discovered that Xenodactyl eggs are explosive when shot – a valuable asset. This sets the premise for a highly challenging flick-screen shoot-em-up game. The oppressive gravity constantly pulls the crafts downward, forcing players to exert continuous effort to ascend and avoid contact with the dangerous terrain. Dinosaur-like creatures litter every screen as they roam the planet's surface, directing their primal aggression toward any alien invaders. Tendrilled vines and fallen rocks

block many pathways, but players can clear them by shooting accurately or strategically placing the volatile eggs. Don't forget there are the big-arsed bosses to contend with – only a studious warrior will ascertain their weaknesses and pave the way for domination of this hostile place.

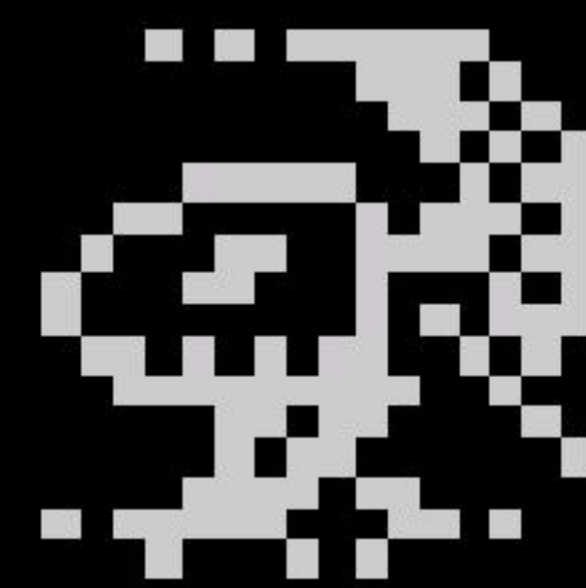
Criticism

My initial thought was that this game was somewhat like Raffaele Cecco's *Cybernoid*, but in truth, it's robust enough to emerge from the shadow of that flattering









comparison. The routes you need to take are much more intricate, and the 'The Floor is Lava' challenge forces you to grapple with gravity on many of the game's screens. Most of the puzzles to advance through each level involve obtaining the explosive egg, placing it in the correct location, and then shooting it to clear a blocked route. The clever aspect of this mechanic is that you cannot shoot while carrying the egg, as it would result in your ship's untimely destruction. This adds a unique dynamic to the game, transforming it from a straightforward shooter into a more complex challenge. The different zones in the game offer a pleasing aesthetic variety, and the transitions between them are separated by traditional scrolling shooter segments and engaging boss fights. Let's not forget the truly innovative approach used for the 128K



music in this title. Thanks to the Roger Whittaker-like warbles that the AY chip can produce, there is a natural jungle bird ambience which continuously chirps alongside the main tune. It's a masterful touch, and I can't recall that being done before.

- **Gordon King**



Comments

This game looks gorgeous, and it's one of those titles that shows off the vibrant colour palette of the Spectrum. The gameplay is brilliant - frustratingly difficult at bits, but worth the perseverance. The music is on another level and needs to be listened to to understand.

Keyboard: Redefinable
Joystick: n/a (you could redefine it as Sinclair interface numbers, I suppose)

Paul's Take

I'll be honest, at the start of the game, when I was presented with a wall to shoot through whilst piloting a flying craft, I had nightmarish *Airwolf* vibes. When I realised that it was not, in fact, my nightmare revisited, I calmed down a little bit... until I tried to get past the first level. One word I would use to describe how to approach this game is 'patience' or perhaps 'perseverance' (though there are no whales or dolphins to be found), because once you've nailed it, the game excels. The music is nothing short of beautiful and well-crafted - perfectly suited for the game's space theme. Moving on from the arcade style of the first level, the side-scrolling shooter of the second was a welcome and unexpected change. Great stuff!



Use of Computer:	90%
Graphics:	91%
Playability:	92%
Getting started:	85%
Addictive Qualities:	90%

Overall: 90%

CRASH Investigates

When there's something that doesn't quite make sense in the world of the ZX Spectrum, Martyn Carroll goes looking for answers. In this issue, he goes in search of Level 9's littlest big adventures.

When it came to text adventures, Level 9 led the way in the 80s. The Buckinghamshire-based firm was founded by three brothers – Pete, Mike, and Nick Austin – and they released numerous titles for multiple systems. The Austins developed their own interpretation language, dubbed 'A-code', which allowed their adventures to be easily ported to the many competing 8-bit computers. A-code was portable, and it was also compact. This meant that the brothers were able to take Crowther and Woods' mainframe milestone *Colossal Cave Adventure* and get it running on home computers with a relatively minuscule amount of memory. Not only that, they also added an extra 70 locations to their interpretation, which they titled *Colossal Adventure*.

But how low could they go? The firm's earliest magazine ads listed 16K versions of *Colossal Adventure* and its follow-up *Adventure Quest*, available for several formats including the Spectrum. But if you look online you'll only find those games available for the 48K Spectrum. So did the 16K Spectrum versions actually exist?

THE INVESTIGATION

Let's go right back to the beginning, to 1981, when Level 9 was founded. The Austins bought and built a Nascom kit computer and began writing software for it. They quickly developed a number of titles and advertised them in the magazines of the day. If you picked up the July 1982 issue of Computing Today, you'd see a quarter-page mail order

ad from Level 9, listing various arcade clones and utilities for the Nascom. Also listed was *Colossal Adventure*. "*Colossal Adventure* has 200 detailed locations, dozens of artefacts, and a host of weird creatures," ran the ad, "yet sophisticated code and data compression has reduced it to 16K." The fact that they'd squeezed the game into 16K was a clear selling point.

adventure

SPECTRUM ZX81 BBC nascom

Colossal Adventure .. 16K/32K .. £8/£10
The classic mainframe game "Adventure", with all the treasures and creatures of the original. And with 70 extra rooms!

Adventure Quest 16K/32K .. £8/£10
From the Great Forest, up Orc Mountain, braving fire, swamp and caverns on a quest against Tyranny. Face vampires, demons, wizards, 200-foot worms...

Adventure games are fascinating. You enter English phrases and the computer acts as a window to worlds of magic.

Every Level 9 adventure has over 200 individually described locations and a game may take weeks to solve! Only our combination of data and code compaction allows so much to be provided.

FREE P&P. NO VAT. Money back if unhappy. Supplied on TDK cassettes. Send order, describing your computer, or a SAE for full details of all our programs to:

LEVEL 9 COMPUTING
229 Hughenden Road, High Wycombe, Bucks

One of Level 9's early ads which lists 16K versions of *Colossal Adventure* and *Adventure Quest*.

Three months later, an ad in Your Computer saw Level 9 expand beyond the Nascom. Now, *Colossal Adventure* and also *Adventure Quest* were available for the Spectrum, BBC Micro and even the ZX81.



```
You are standing beside a
small brick building at the
end of a road from the north.
A river flows south. To the
north is open country and all
around is dense forest
What now?
IN
You are in a small building
with a well in the middle of
the only room. A rusty ladder
leads down the well into
darkness
There is a bunch of keys here
There is a small brass lamp
here
There is an empty bottle here
What now?
GET LAMP
I have it now
What now?
```

Level 9's presentation was basic, but when the adventures were this good, did they really need any frills?

```
Welcome to Adventure Quest
from Level 9. Enter English
phrases (without punctuation)
to play, find and defeat the
Demon Lord AGALIAREPT to win.
You are at the end of a road
from the north, outside a
small brick building. A river
flows south through a narrow
valley and there is dense
woodland all around.
What next?
SOUTH
You are in a narrow
north-south valley through the
forest. A small stream,
clogged by dead vegetation,
seeps sluggishly south. A
miasma of decay pervades the
scene.
What next?
```

Adventure Quest was Level 9's home grown follow-up to their version of Colossal Cave Adventure.

as they were priced differently: the 16K version was £8, the 32K version was £10. Yet despite being advertised in a mainstream computing magazine, it would appear that not a single person bought a 16K version. At least, nothing has been archived to date, for any of the systems they were supposedly available for (and on the ZX81, neither game is available in any format).

What's more, for each computer, two separate versions were on offer: one that required a minimum of 16K memory, and another that required 32Kb. The versions were clearly distinct

Now, the obvious answer is that Level 9 never actually developed these versions. Perhaps the ads were just designed to test the market, and when insufficient orders for the 16K versions came in, they focused on the 32K versions. Except – at this point, Level 9 was very much a back-bedroom



Recorded onto standard TDK tapes, the original releases could not hide their homemade origins.

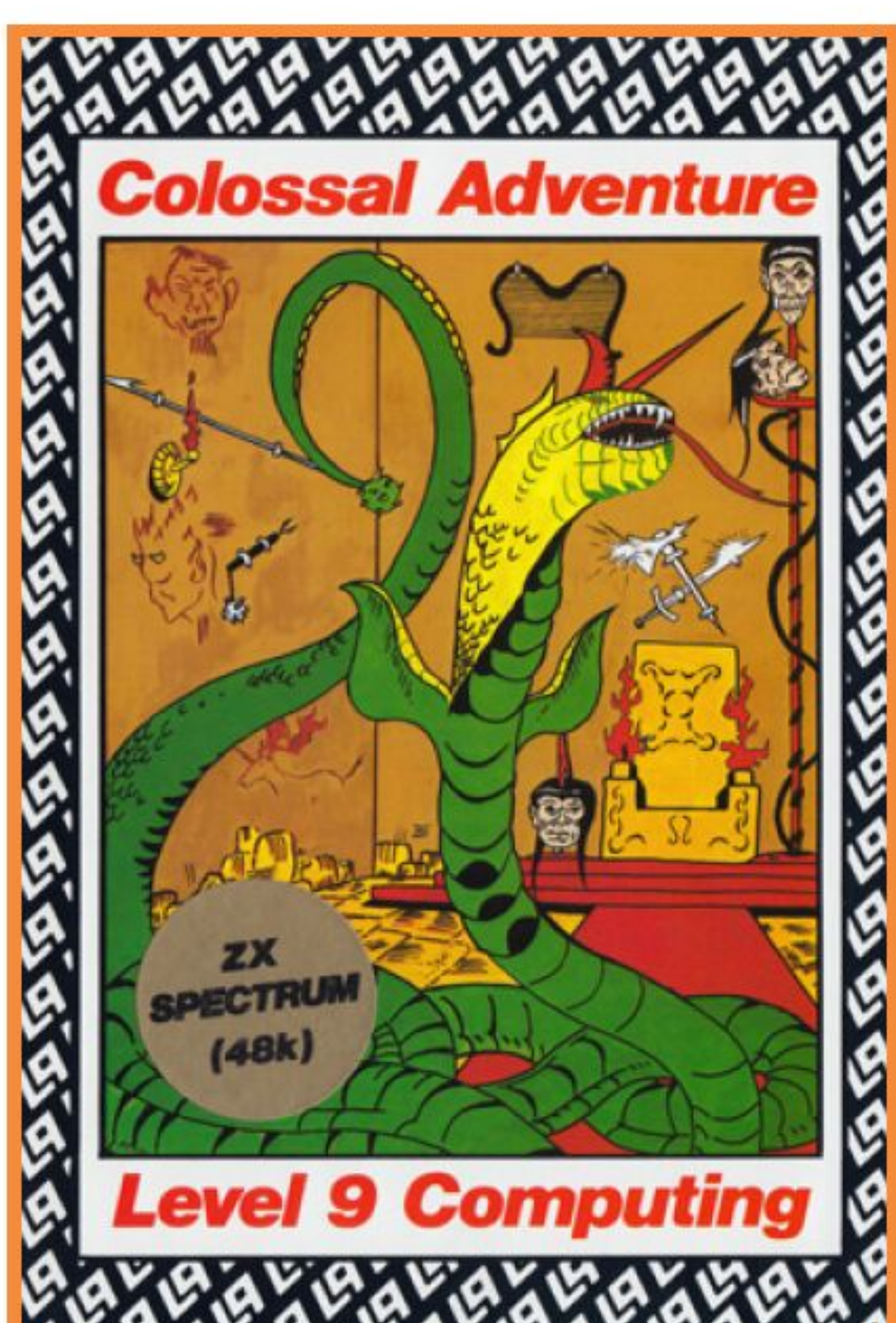
operation, with the brothers running off copies on an order-by-order basis. It seems unlikely they'd spend money advertising versions they couldn't actually supply. This is all moot anyway, as programmer Mike Austin has



Level 9 later added location graphics to Colossal Adventure and its sequels, as part of the Jewels of Darkness compilation.



Level 9 colour-coded their early releases. Spectrum games were orange.



The later re-release featured new artwork by Godfrey Dowson.

since confirmed that they DID develop 16K versions. “Yes, there were quite a few 16K versions in the early days,” he told Mark Hardisty, editor of Classic Adventurer magazine. “The main difference was usually that the text was precised down to a very small size. I don’t have a comprehensive list unfortunately.”

Well, we can help with the list. According to the ads, *Colossal Adventure* and *Adventure Quest* were crunched down to 16K. The third game in the trilogy, *Dungeon Adventure*, and all of the Level 9 releases that followed, were

only ever advertised as 32K minimum games. So it’s two titles, on four systems – Spectrum, ZX81, BBC Micro, and Nascom.

With regard to the 16K Spectrum version, there’s an obvious issue here. The low-end model had 16K of RAM, yet around 7K of that was reserved for the video memory, leaving just 9K for programs. That’s not much. Take, for example, one of the most popular adventures for the 16K Spectrum,



Adventure Quest was the second game in Level 9’s unofficial ‘Middle Earth Trilogy’.

Planet Of Death. This Artic effort features 20 locations. *Colossal Adventure* features 200! Level 9 were the compression kings, but surely even they couldn’t cram 200 locations into 9K. Oh, hang on.

“We targeted computers down to about 8K,” revealed Mike Austin, in issue one of Classic Adventurer magazine, published in 2018. “I have a feeling we may have done a 4K version [of *Colossal Adventure*] at some point. The text usually compressed to about 25% of its original size.” It seems that a 16K Spectrum version was quite feasible, being well within Level 9’s wheelhouse. So where is it?

THE OUTCOME

I understand that some Level 9 fans are currently in contact with the Austins with a view to archiving their work, so these missing versions may come to light at some point. They may even uncover the long-lost Nascom-only game Fantasy, which is believed to be their first genre title, described as “a competitive adventure set in a gothic mansion”.

Until that time, the hope is that someone – perhaps you, reading this – ordered a 16K version for the Spectrum or any version for the ZX81 back in 1982. If you did and received the game (or alternatively, a reply saying it wasn’t available in that format), please let us know here at CRASH. It would be amazing to solve this mystery after 40-odd years. Over to you...

You really can't go wrong with any Level 9 game as they are really brilliant

CRASH MICRO SEPT '84.

Which ever machine you own, if you have the vaguest tendency towards adventure playing then you must try one of these games (unfortunately you'll probably end up wanting to buy the lot!).

Computing Today, August 84

To me, all Level 9 adventures create a remarkable atmosphere because the descriptions sound so life-like. This is where so many other adventures fail.

Crash, July 84

But it's not just the size of the game it's the quality as well that is astonishing... scenes to fire the imagination.

PCG, April 84

As in all Level 9's adventures, the real pleasure comes not from scoring points but in exploring the world in which the game is set and learning about its denizens.

Which Micro?, February 84

(LORDS OF TIME). As we have come to expect from Level 9, the program is executed with wonderful style.

Highly recommended.

PCW, 1 February 84

I thoroughly recommend these Adventures, they are excellent value for money. No self-respecting Adventure-addict should be without them. I believe Level 9 are producing a series of Adventures which should be regarded as classics.

Atari User, July 84

These programs run very fast and there are no frustrating pauses. Level 9 Adventures are superbly designed and programmed, the contents first rate. The implementation of Colossal Adventure is nothing short of brilliance; rush out and buy it. While you're at it, buy their others too. Simply smashing!

Your 64, June 84

Level 9 – arguably the producer of the best adventure games in the UK – has done it again. LORDS OF TIME is a sparkling addition to its stable of winners.

Acorn User, July 84

(SNOWBALL). This is another imaginative, massive-scaled immensely enjoyable adventure from those experts down at Level 9 Computing.

Your Computer, March 84

Level 9's epic adventures are now here for the AMSTRAD. Disk versions are available for the BBC (40/80 track) and Commodore 64. And, best of all, RETURN TO EDEN is ready. It's been a busy month!

RETURN TO EDEN is the long-awaited sequel to Level 9's top-selling Snowball adventure. Now it's here with 220 locations, masses of puzzles, and with pictures on the GBM and Spectrum versions.

NEW

Return to Eden

Level 9 Computing

Available from W H Smith and good computer shops everywhere. If your local dealer doesn't stock Level 9 adventures yet, get him to contact us or: Centresoft, Microdealer UK, Ferranti & Craig, Letourneault, Lime Tree, LVL, PCS, R & R or Wonderbridge.

AMSTRAD BBC CBM64 SPECTRUM MTX ORIC 1 LYNX NASCOM ATARI

1. **COLOSSAL ADVENTURE**. The classic mainframe game with 70 bonus rooms. £9.95 £11.95

2. **ADVENTURE QUEST**. An epic journey through Middle Earth. £9.95 £11.95

3. **DUNGEON ADVENTURE**. A massive game which completes the Middle Earth Trilogy. £9.95 £11.95

4. **SNOWBALL**. Save the interstar freezer, Snowball 0, in a huge space adventure with over 7000 locations. £9.95 £11.95

5. **RETURN TO EDEN**. SF adventure on the weirdest planet ever. The sequel to Snowball, though you don't need to have played this. £9.95 £11.95

7. **LORDS OF TIME**. A humorous romp through World History. £9.95 £11.95

I ENCLOSE A CHEQUE/PO FOR £9.95 EACH (CASSETTE) OR £11.95 EACH (DISK) FOR BBC OR CBM 64

My name:

My address:

My micro is a:

(one of those listed below, with at least 32K of memory).

Contact: **LEVEL 9 COMPUTING** Dept CM, 229, Hughenden Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 8PG.

Later Level 9 ads only listed games that required at least of 32K memory.



Austin space. Nick (left), with his older brother Pete.

Thanks to Gareth Pitchford, author of the *Twilight Inventory* book, for doing the heavy lifting that made this article possible. Visit his website at 8bitag.com. Also thanks to Paul Monaghan for providing photos of Level 9's early releases.

THE CRASH INTERVIEW

Gordon King
speaks with
prolific Spectrum
coder, Paulo
Villalva, about his
recent Spectrum
output.

Links to support
Amawek's work:

amaweeks.com

amaweeks.itch.io/

patreon.com/amaweeks



Amaweeks A.K.A. Paulo Andrés de Matos Villalva is a 42-year-old Brazilian game dev. In his 10-year career as a developer, he has created over 10 retro games with versions for ZX Spectrum, PC, Mega Drive, and MSX. He works as a freelancer pixel artist and level designer from time to time.

CRASH: Hi Paulo. Congratulations on your recent **CRASH SMASHES**. I believe you are relatively new to the ZX Spectrum and only discovered it around 2014. How did you come across it, and how did it feel to you?

PAULO: I grew up playing on the Atari 2600 and NES, so despite being familiar with 8-bit games, I only came across the ZX Spectrum around 2014 by emulation. Two things led me to this intriguing machine: the news that some people were developing a *Castlevania* game for it and the discovery of AGD, which seemed like an accessible learning engine for a 'non-programmer' like me. As a pixel artist fascinated by working within palette and resolution restrictions, I quickly fell in love with the 1-bit depth colour sprites, the overall bright palette, and the 'famous' colour clash.

Was it something you initially wanted to code for? Were there any games from the back catalogue that inspired you?

Initially, it wasn't in my plans to make games for it. At first, I wanted to create retro games for modern PCs. The growing ZX Spectrum homebrew scene, which has been flourishing a lot since 2016, caught my attention. When MPAGD, a PC version of AGD came along, allowing me to port games, I couldn't resist anymore. I created my first ZX game, *Devwill Too*, a reworked version of the game I had created for the Mega Drive in collaboration with my programmer friend Laudelino. I must confess that I'm more





familiar with new homebrew games for the ZX Spectrum than the old ones, but of course, I went to explore and play some of the classics. I enjoyed the *Dan Dare* series, the ZX version of *Mr. Heli*, and I like *Exolon*, which is my favourite among the older titles.

MPAGD provided that conduit for you. How easy was it for you to get to grips with it and the nuances of the Spectrum?

I often say that I'm not a real programmer, but rather an artist who dabbles in making games. Before MPAGD, I had only used visual language game engines for PC, such as Arcade Game Studio and Clickteam Multimedia Fusion. With MPAGD, it was the first time I programmed with scripts, as it uses its own language similar to BASIC. I actually loved it and quickly adapted to its language. BASIC is something truly designed for beginner programmers like me. As for the limitations of the ZX Spectrum and the engine, including memory, graphics, and sound - they are both the greatest challenge and the most enjoyable part. It's satisfying having to adapt and constantly trim the project scope to get to the essence of what I intend with the game and fit it all on the screen.

TCQ was the first game I played of yours. It was remarkable, abstract, and so refreshing as a platformer. How did this all come about?

First and foremost, I am an artist, holding a degree in Visual Arts from the public university in the state where I live. I taught art in schools for five years. Back in 2020, I was working with my friend Luiz Souza, an artist and historian. We were discussing the blend of fiction and reality in art. He then crafted a fictional story in which Kandinsky (one of the pioneers of abstract painting) died as a junkie in the 1980s, experimenting with creating digital abstract art, influencing developers of 8-bit microcomputer games. I decided that I needed to create a game based on this fiction. Instead of Kandinsky, I drew inspiration from the French painter Piet Mondrian, who primarily created abstract paintings using lines and colour planes, which suited the capabilities of the ZX Spectrum much better. The game's geometric shapes are still influenced by Kandinsky's theories. Finally, the gameplay is an adaptation of The Lost Vikings game that I had recently played with my wife. In place of the three Vikings, each with their own abilities, we have the three basic geometric shapes. The combination of all these elements resulted in TCQ.

I have to say that the colour clash being used as a feature was a stroke of genius. I don't think any other game has ever done that this way. Was this an objective from the beginning?

Yes, it was. Ever since my first ZX game, *Devwill Too*, I had been trying to use the colour clash in an interesting way, which I attempted to do with waterfalls and water puddles. However, in TCQ, with solid geometric shape



BRUXÓLICO



sprites, without outlines or details, more like silhouettes, I was finally able to achieve what I had in mind, which was to use the ZX's limitation as if it were a kind of graphical 'shader' effect, similar to a modern indie game. I aimed to create illusions of depth and transparency with colour swaps, and I

believe I succeeded. If I set the two possible colours of an 8x8 tile that makes up the scene to the same colour, let's say white, the sprite becomes invisible when passing through that, giving the illusion of passing behind it, for example. Thus, I thought that each screen of the game should be constructed like an abstract painting that could be printed and hung on the wall. Anyone who has done an oil or acrylic painting knows that it's common

to use colour layering as a form of transparency, especially after the paint underneath has dried. It was a challenge, but it was a source of satisfaction

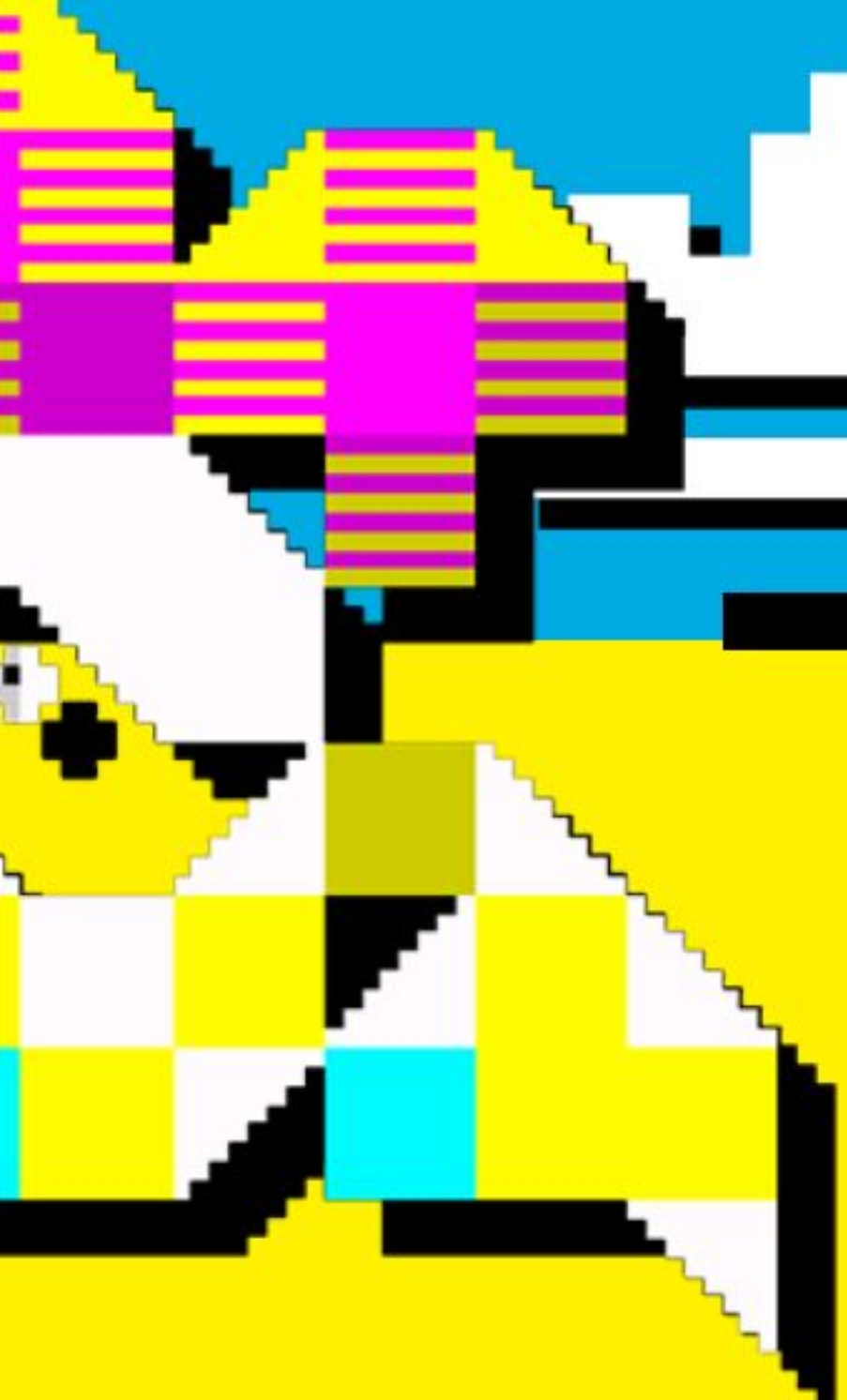
because, in the end, I believe I achieved something like living abstract paintings, with sprites that interact with colours and give it movement.

Onto your second CRASH SMASH, Bruxólico - This looks and plays masterfully. Would you say it's the culmination of everything you learned by making TCQ. Were the seeds of this starting to grow as you were finishing off TCQ?

Yep, you are right. TCQ gave me the confidence that I could creatively push the limits of the engine, trying to achieve things for which it wasn't initially designed. Working with those abstract shapes in TCQ gave me more freedom, for example, to experiment with creating the illusion of 'forced' screen scrolling (the second stage). After TCQ, I was certain that I needed to use this in *Bruxólico* and go further, even attempting to create the effect of manual screen scrolling linked to the player's movement in the centre of the screen, among other possible illusions.

Bruxólico is steeped in cultural folklore from your own region. How important was this aspect of the game to you?

Very important indeed. Since my first game in 2014, I've set myself the mission of always seeking something different in terms of narrative and character creation and the fictional universe in the game. I already admired how *Locomalito* (*The Curse of Issyos, Maldita Castilla, l'Abbaye des Morts*, and other PC retro games), the Spanish indie dev, managed to blend references between



classic video games and his local culture. I've made a consistent effort to steer clear of clichés in this regard and, when possible, to incorporate local Brazilian and even city-specific culture. It's also not about a vulgar or caricature use of local culture but rather about blending it with the cosmopolitan culture of the rest of the world. I first tried to do this more explicitly in *Virgil's Purgatory* by mixing Dante's *Divine Comedy* with the folk 'Cordel' literature of the Brazilian Northeast and its use of woodcut art.

Despite the inherent touch of nostalgia in this work, that is not the most important aspect. I view retro video games as an art form - just as valid as comics, cinema, literature, or any other form of artistic expression. In *Bruxólico*, I finally realised a plan I had for many years, which was to work with the folklore of my city and the work of Franklin Cascaes, an artist who preserved and helped recreate the cultural heritage of the island where I live. My parents are local folk artists and represent this culture through figurative ceramics, so I am surrounded by these references. My way of creating something contemporary is to bring this richness into a game, not ironically on an obsolete system like the ZX Spectrum.

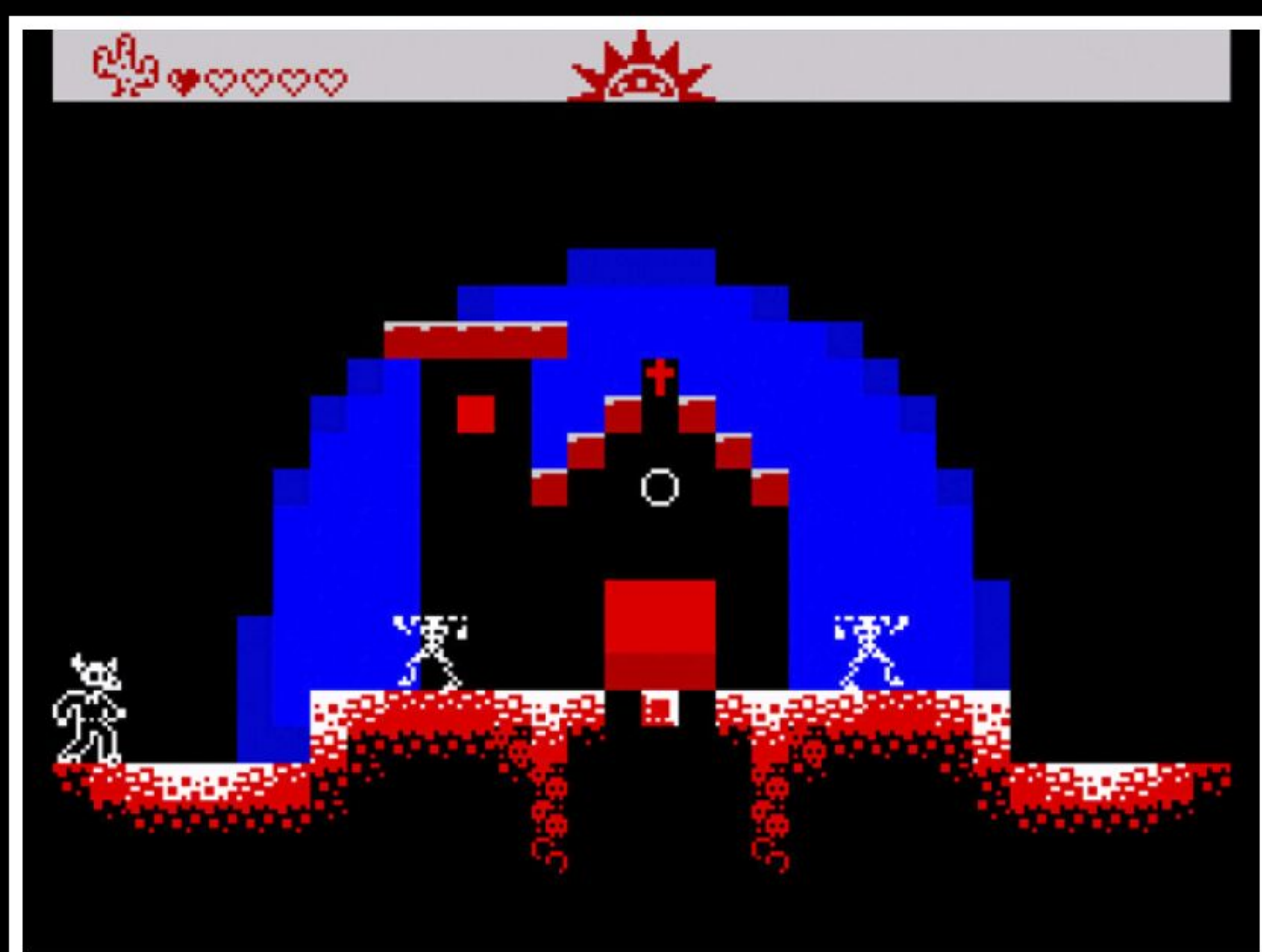
Local culture in the form of *Anachronistic Art* in a video game that challenges the planned obsolescence of the industry, I may say.

The Bruxólico aesthetic is akin to a travelling troupe of performers telling a puppet tale from their waggon, using moving props to bring the story to life. The diorama on each screen looks incredible. How did you achieve this?

Things are happening on the screen that I thought were impossible for the Spectrum. But I try to leverage my strong suit, which is knowledge of art and how the construction of the image occurs in the human eye through the concept of Gestalt. I wanted to create these pseudo-3D visuals you see in *Bruxólico* for two main reasons. The first is narrative: the legends and folklore that inspired me have their origins in oral culture, from which Franklin Cascaes drew the raw material to create stories, drawings, and sculptures. So, I wanted the image to reflect this atmosphere of storytelling, and the visual style of the screens presented as a sort of performer's stage aims for this purpose. It's a way to convey this without text, purely through visuals, which I value in a game.



VIRGIL'S PURGATORY



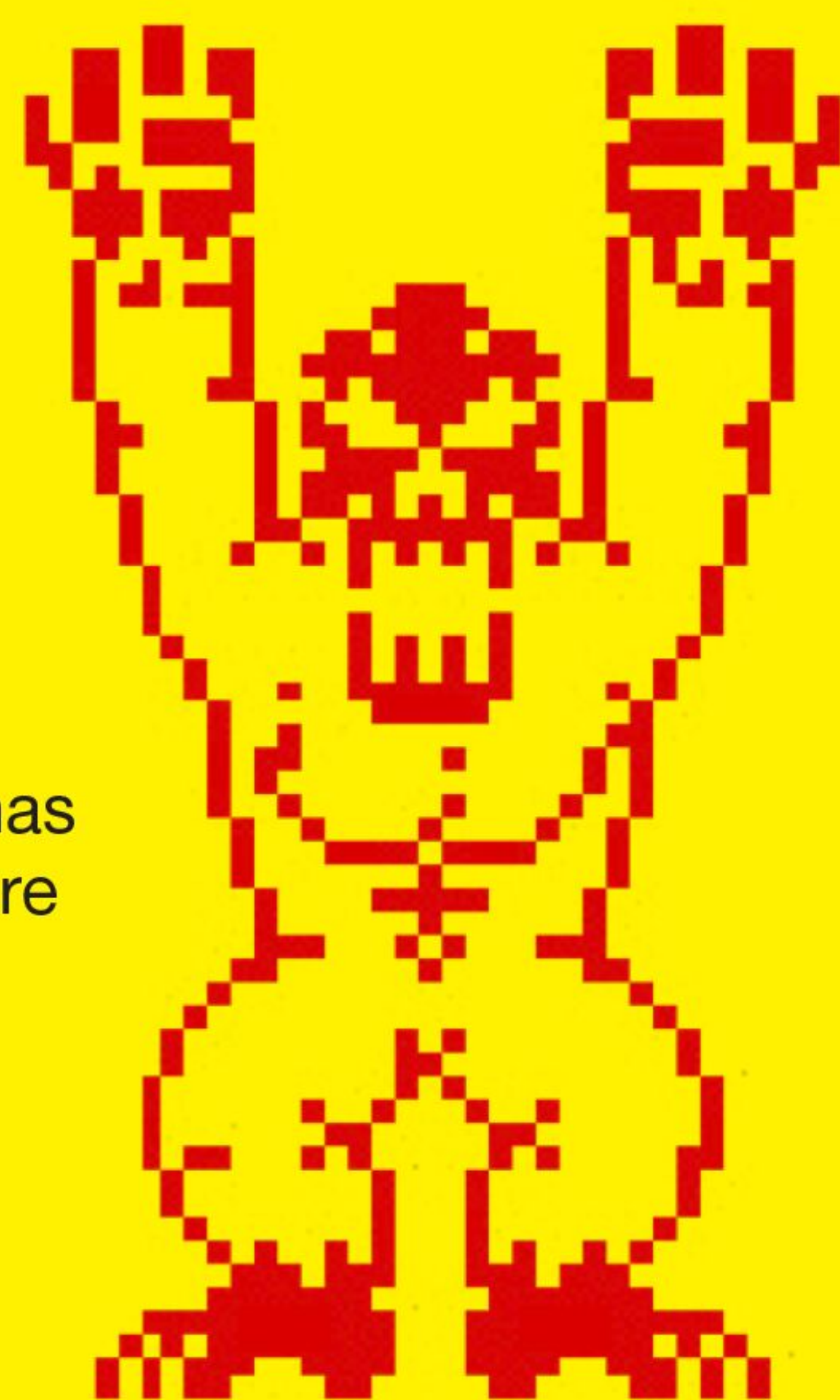
The second reason was both visual and technical. The design of the scenes with a certain perspective helps create the illusion of depth and makes the

scroll effect even more convincing. I recalled a class I once taught my students about cinema, discussing how Georges Méliès, who was both an illusionist and a pioneering filmmaker, created the earliest effects using simple camera tricks.

Gestalt theory tells us that our brain doesn't see only the details of an image but primarily the whole picture in its essence and elementary forms. So, I used sprites (which in MPAGD are limited to a maximum size of twelve 16x16 pixels) that move under certain programmed conditions and combine with the elements of the scene to create a convincing screen scroll illusion. I had to do this carefully because the Ghostly Ox kicking already uses two sprites, and when shooting, even more, plus the enemies on the screen, and the total couldn't exceed twelve sprites.

What inspired you to do the graphic novel and audiobook that accompanies the game?

Engaging my work with games alongside other forms of art is a way to understand it as a language. Over the past few years, in addition to drawing inspiration from cinema, literature, comic books, and so on, to create my characters and their stories, I felt the need to experiment with expanding games into these other languages in some way, my own modest and accessible way. A few years ago, I took a course on creating illustrated books. Now was the time to put that knowledge to use and create something along those lines - an illustrated book, with the story of the Ghost-Ox and its adventure that runs through the game but delves deeper into the narrative and cultural references. You know, the ZX Spectrum has limited memory, even more limited in MPAGD, and there would be no way to put all this text in the game, nor do I wish to. I believe that an action





game can have some text, but it has to be concise and to the point. The game should speak most through its visuals and gameplay. This was an opportunity to create something multi-language with a blend of a game and an illustrated storybook.

The “audiobook” is also part of this and stems from the same reasons. So, I decided to make multimedia use of the cassette tape and have these audio stories, along with sound effects and soundscapes as they used to be on the radio storytelling. I had never seen this before and didn’t know if it was possible, so I asked Filipe Veiga from Teknamic about it, and he showed me *Deus Ex Machina* by Automata. I thought that worked wonderfully and ahead of its time, and I was sure that I really needed to create an audiobook for *Bruxólico*.

More recently, you’ve been releasing revised versions of previous games - Devwill 2.0 and Virgil’s Purgatory ZX 2.0. We’ve featured the latter in this issue, but like Devwill 2.0, it seemed to have slipped us on its original release, so both are being played with fresh eyes. For the uninitiated like ourselves, are these merely quick fixes, or can you explain the changes you’ve made to these?

Devwill Too was my first game in MPAGD, and I created it while learning the basics of programming in the engine, so it was natural for it to have some issues left to solve. Now, with accumulated experience, I was able to go back to the code, rewrite several parts, and save some memory. This allowed me to add details to the scenery and illustration screens at the end of the game and address some bugs that had been bothering me. The first version of *Virgil’s Purgatory ZX* was a game in which I had to cut a lot of content to fit within the 48KB of memory. Now, with the experience of creating *Bruxólico* on three sides of a cassette tape and three

programs that can be loaded at any time, like chapters, I decided to do something similar with Virgil. So, I not only made improvements but also significantly expanded the game, dividing it into two programs (or chapters) and practically creating a sequel to the old version. Chapter 1 is basically the 2021 game, but with changes in level design, the addition of more areas and music, and the inclusion of chip items. The second chapter is almost entirely new and brings new texts, areas, bosses, and music. It’s almost as if it were a sequel game. This is now the definitive version of *Virgil’s Purgatory*.

Now that you’re at a stage of game-making you’re happy with, what’s next for Amaweeks?

I still have the first PC games that I want to port to the ZX Spectrum, namely *Zé Baldinho (Joe Bucket)*, *Marlow*, and *Devwill*. After that, I want to experiment with new genres beyond action-platformers. I’ve been thinking about creating a focused beat ’em-up game in the style of *Altered Beast*, among other genres. I have a bunch of projects waiting in the queue, always with gameplay inspired by classic games that have left a mark on me, such as *Castlevania*, *Megaman*, and *Metroid*, with several of them already in pre-production with conceptual art and story. It’s a lot, actually, a lot of work for many years to come. To do that, I’m still fighting to make a living as an artist, and that’s why I need to charge for the games, to which I’ve dedicated almost full-time work. I ask as many people as possible to support me on Patreon and purchase the games in both digital and physical formats, thus ensuring the long-term viability of my work.



VIRGIL'S PURGATORY



Amaweks

£ DONATION • 09/2023 • 48K / 128K

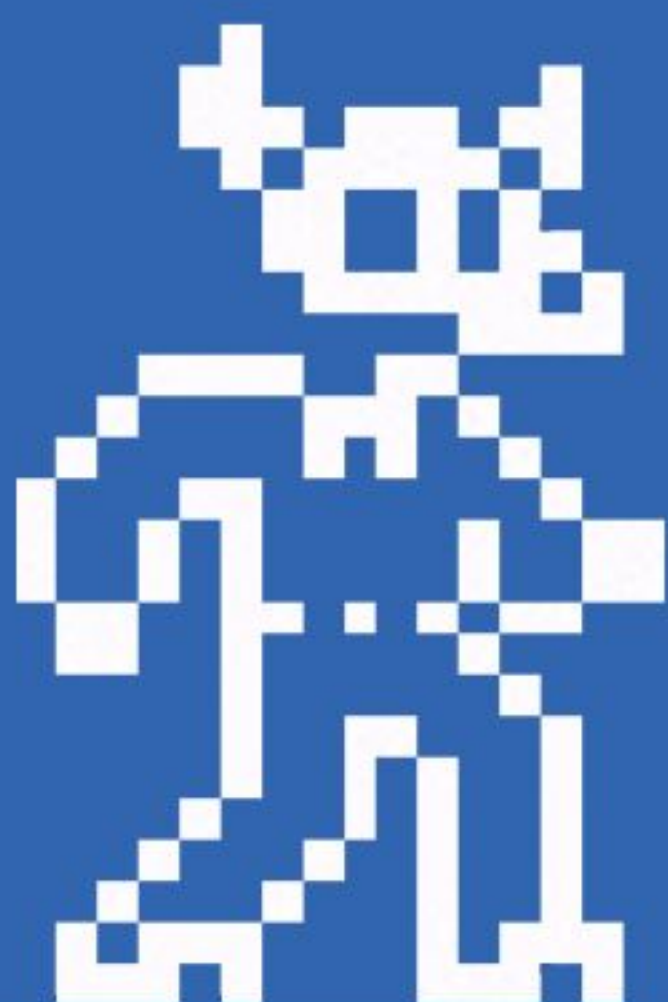
DOWNLOAD: <https://on.mom/poUf>

What do the band Garbage and this game have in common? They both now have a release with Version 2.0 in the title, with the former being the whole title, of course. That's where the similarities end, though, because as much as I'd like to meet Shirley Manson in Purgatory, it's Virgil that I'm stuck with. Damn.

This is a redux of the original ZX 2021 release of *Virgil's Purgatory* (the original PC version was released in 2016), which features more rooms and additional game on top - hence 2.0. Not much can be found on the background or story of Virgil's plight, with author Amaweks citing that the game is more a commentary on regional Brazilian themes, taking themes 'from the history

'cangaço', folk 'cordel'

literature with all that goes along, and find parallels with Dante Alighieri's Divine



Gordon's Take

Amaweks' games always come with a superlative narrative that the author conveys with concise words, graphical choices, and moody music. Like *Bruxólico*, which was awarded a CRASH Smash, *Virgil's Purgatory* is a cultural Brazilian folklore-inspired game. This time, it's a retelling of Dante's Divine Comedy within this culture. I'm always excited for games from this developer as they genuinely have their own spirit and play like no other game I've come across in all my years of Spectrum gaming. This redux edition proves yet again that Paulo is a master storyteller and a perfectionist; he's now learned better skills as a game maker and wants to make this game the best version of itself it can be. I just adore the colour choice in this game - red, white, and black - it just feels like you are in the land of the damned.



Comedy.' I'm not going to pretend I understand what that means, maybe I will when I grow up.

Criticism

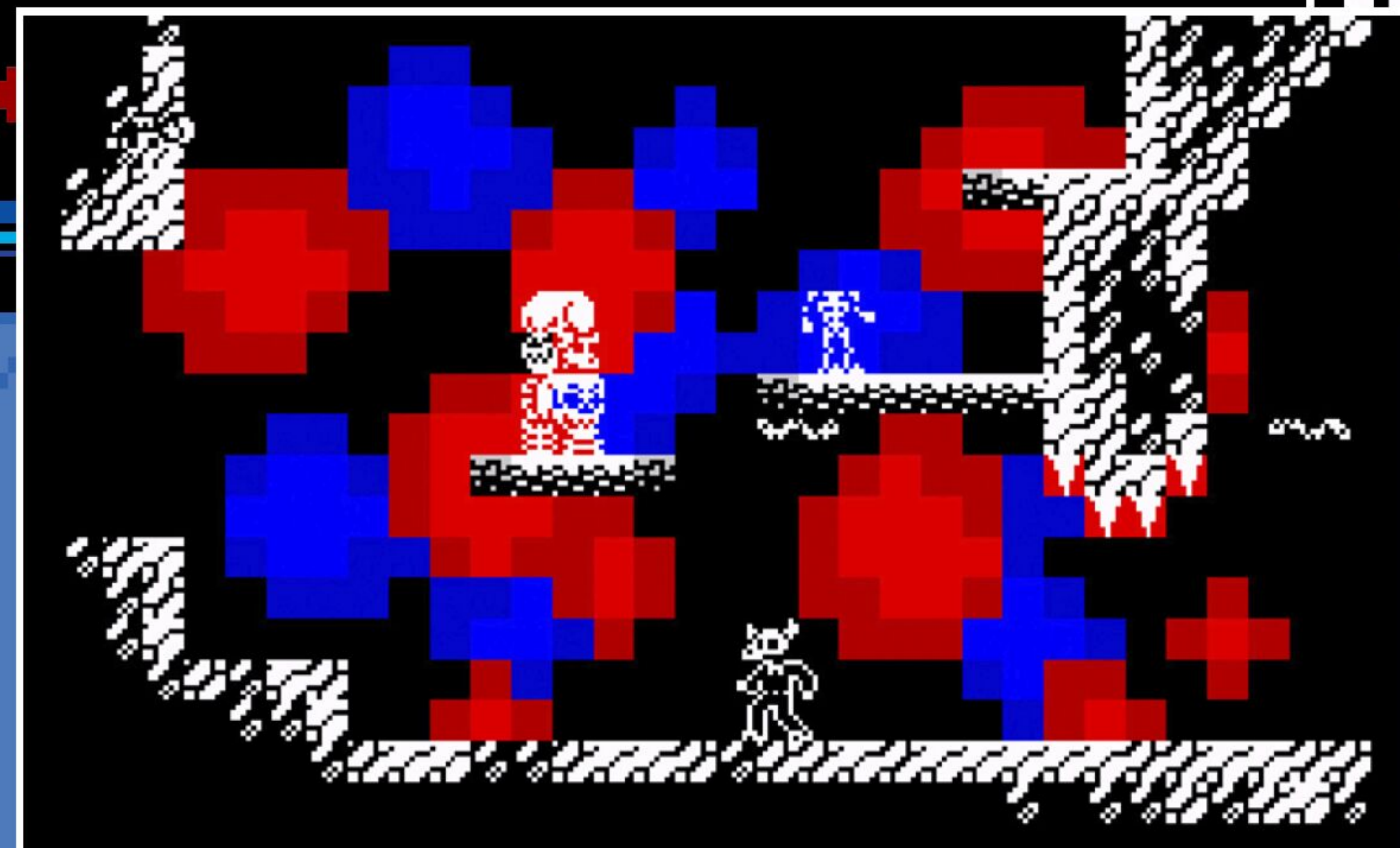
As you may have guessed, the game is set in purgatory, and Virgil needs to make his

escape, and with his only weapon being his head - yes, really - he has to use it wisely. As you may also find with it being purgatory, there are a few evil beings to contend with, as well as having to deal with being stuck in this rather troublesome limbo. Going back to 'using your head', this is a literal meaning as



hitting 'fire' will see Virgil's head fly a few feet in front of him with the hope that it's accurate enough to take out the enemy ahead of you. If you're not accurate, then your head will lie on the floor, waiting for you to collect it again. It can be a little tricky to recover depending on the type of enemy walking over it, so if possible, it's best not to push it. Having no head is not a problem for Virgil, as he can still wander around headless until he's successfully reattached it again. You'd think he'd need some medication for that!

Something has to be said regarding the aesthetics of the game. Though the backgrounds may lack 'finesse', they are certainly striking, with basic shapes and the Speccy colour palette coming together in perfect harmony and creating the atmosphere that I'm sure Amaweks was



going for. Another welcome feature comes with the bosses that you find around the place. Whilst a bit of a challenge at first, these are not impossible and help break up the game and also bulk it up a little, helping it move away from the usual 'platformer' that it could have fallen into.

Purgatory is not all bad, of course. As you make your way through the treachery and debauchery, you may be lucky enough to stumble across a couple of angels who will help top up your energy and maybe even give you a tip or two. How angelic.

The second part of the game is more of the same and offers extra odd baddies, with the pile of skulls reminiscent a little of the ones seen in *Gift of The Gods*, which is no bad thing, of course. Oh, and this time, your head automatically flies back onto your neck - score.

- Paul Davies

Comments

Featuring eerie, spooky, and very atmospheric graphics - it looks and sounds so fine. The presentation fronts a challenging game, with an atmosphere that has you believing that you've fallen from grace and landed in that particular waiting room into hell. Well, it's your fault - whatever it was that you did.

Keyboard: Q,A,O,P& M

Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston

Use of Computer:	80%
Graphics:	81%
Playability:	83%
Getting started:	84%
Addictive Qualities:	83%
Overall:	85%





With the second CRASH Live event coinciding with the imminent arrival of the second Kickstarter machines, Mike Cadwallader teases what attendees can expect and reflects on the end of the current phase of the NEXT journey.

Crash Live 2023 is looming on the horizon. Once upon a time, we had hoped that backers would be receiving their units in the weeks preceding Crash, but more delays squashed that idea.



Turning a negative into a positive, could there be a better place to present the Kickstarter 2 Spectrum Next for the first time? A Sinclair-focused event full of Spectrum enthusiasts? Many members of the team will be in attendance, and sitting with them will be an innocent-looking brown cardboard box. Inside will be a production Kickstarter 2 Spectrum Next in all its packaging glory.



You will be able to look, you will be able to touch, and hopefully, you will think it's a thing of beauty. If you purchased an early bird ticket for the event, you could even be taking it home with you at the end of the day. If you're not an early bird, then there will still be a raffle opportunity to walk away with something truly special.

The amazing community at Crash Live 2022 demonstrated their mutual passion for what Sinclair created long ago. It was a

warm, welcoming, and extremely positive environment. It was all over far too quickly with so many people to talk to and so many things to see. This year in addition to seeing the new Spectrum Next, we will be demonstrating the latest games such as *Head Over Heels*, *Way of the Exploding Fist*, and more.



For all of the backers and shop purchasers who came with us on this long journey, we say thank you. We are so pleased to be able to fulfil our obligations to you at last. Units have been fully assembled, tested, and put into boxes. Boxes have gone into crates and crates loaded onto ships, starting their (annoyingly long) voyage across the seas.



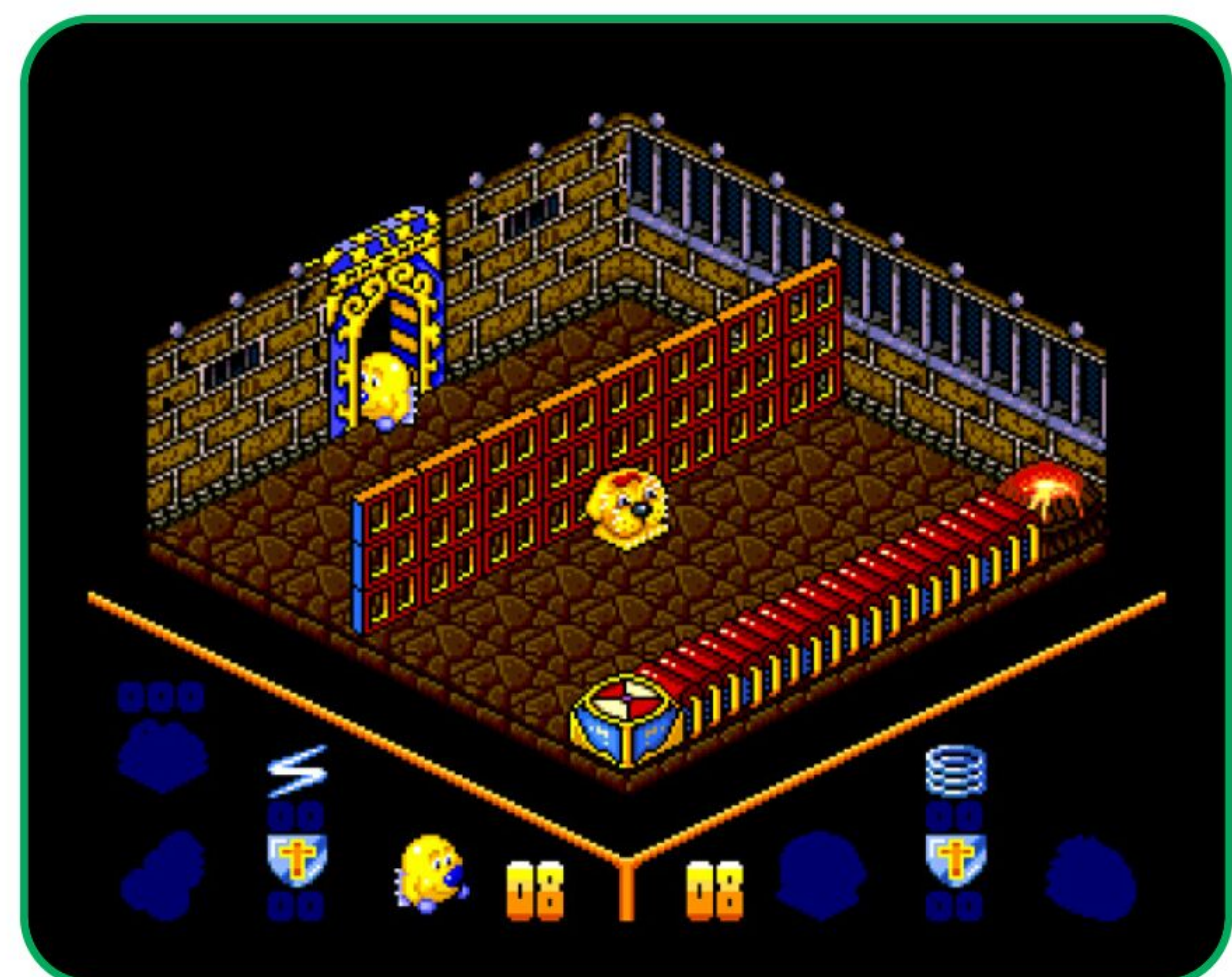


Gordon King investigates the status of previously announced NEXT games and gives developers the opportunity to update CRASH readers on when we're likely to get our hands on them.

Anounced way back in 2020, this highly anticipated remake was intended for the NEXT as a stretch goal tier for the Kickstarter 2 campaign. Initially, it was a partnership between Jim Bagley and Simon Butler. Unfortunately, it never came to fruition and was on the brink of becoming a missing-in-action title. Fast forward to 2023, and Michael Flashware has taken on the role of the main programmer, working tirelessly and utilising the fully completed set of sprites from Simon.

Although it doesn't stray too far from the original, there are going to be some more puzzles and additional graphics. What's even more exciting is that it's expected to be released in time for Christmas. Particularly promising is the potential of the isometric engine for future titles for the Spectrum Next. If you want to hear from the horse's mouth, nip over to the archive section on CRASH Radio, where Simon discusses it in his mini-podcast (episode 32).

<https://crashradio.org.uk/>





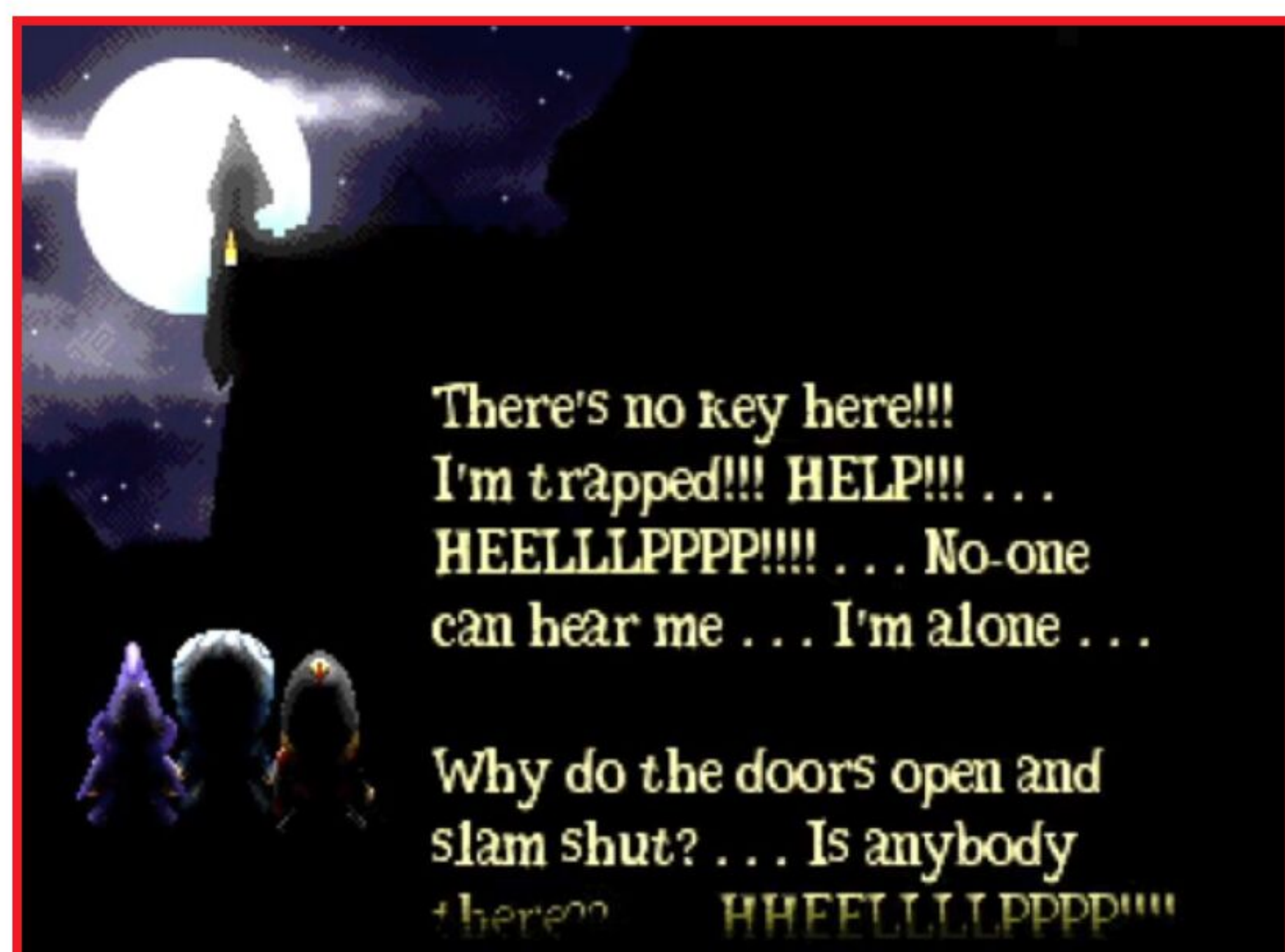
9bitcolor

£FREE • 📅 08/2023 • 🎮 NEXT

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The classic Spectrum might never have had its own official mascot, but the vast library and lifetime of the computer spawned more than a few iconic characters. Instantly recognisable from their low-resolution, colour clash-defying sprites rather than their optimistic, artistically hand-drawn cover designs, those typically monochrome heroes of the most popular games on the platform invoke huge nostalgia through being symbolic of the system's

artistic trends, heavily influenced by the hardware limitations. With only a couple of years of game development now behind it, the Next is still yet to define its own synonymous style, in spite of some great titles with favourably designed heroes. To really see how the Next's capabilities have evolved Spectrum characters, titles that can offer a direct parity with classic games will clearly show it best.



Delivering such parity in 2023 is the publisher 9bitcolor, who has taken the work of a small team of coders from the early 2000s, who have taken the work of a small team of coders from the early 2000s, when a modern remake of Ultimate's smash 1983 dungeon crawler was created for PC, and ported the facelifted game to the Spectrum Next. Taking the original audio samples of the classic game and fusing them with massively upgraded visuals worthy of modern expectations, the bestselling *Atic Atac*'s gameplay has been translated with an improved atmosphere and perspective to bring an extra dimension to the much-loved 80s hit.

Criticism

Richard Jordan's original PC remake took everything the original game had and dialled it up for nostalgia-seeking adults on their daily computer hardware of the 'noughties'. A huge colour

palette and high resolution enabled the original hero characters, enemies, background, and HUD to be redrawn in amazing detail, with improved shading, spawning and

death animations, magic effects and situation effects. Retaining most of those original visual effects, those assets have been translated to the Next port in a way that loses little of the PC remake's detail or the original game's charm. All three of the original characters of the knight, wizard and serf also make it, along with all of the original dungeons and main enemies, beautifully redrawn in full colour and with their own weapons and skills intact. The biggest change in terms of appearance is that in order to retain the detail of the PC remake in the Next's much lower resolution, the game perspective switches from simple fixed-screen room flipping to a zoomed view that pans around each room with the movement

of the character. Health is the only on-screen status element present at all times, with the HUD information of items collected pushed to the pause screen. With the new classic 'Zelda-like' low light/torch illuminated sections and lower contrast collectibles, navigation will present a tougher challenge for players less familiar with the original game's layouts.

Presentation is improved with the retention of classic sound effects overlaid onto beautifully orchestrated intro and in-game music, with spooky dungeon-like echoes adding to the aesthetic. Players are treated to a scrolling intro story, choice of available characters and redefinable controls before starting gameplay, which are saved to the SD card for returning gameplay sessions. Though argument can be made for the silence of the original game creating tension and highlighting the





effects, the music definitely adds atmosphere and takes nothing away from the old samples. Whilst those sounds are familiar and authentic, your mileage may vary as to the annoyance of footsteps at the end of a long dungeon dive.

Pleasant though it is to see such a fan favourite brought to the Next with a modern twist, there are some drawbacks to be seen through those rose-tinted spectacles. For one, the otherwise positive factor of the game being remade in its entirety does mean that for experienced players, the dungeon layouts are

identical as far as I have seen, which will make beating the game in the first few tries very

easy. Even for novices, it soon becomes apparent that the enemies are little more than avoidable obstacles as you mentally map the layouts, thinning out the depth

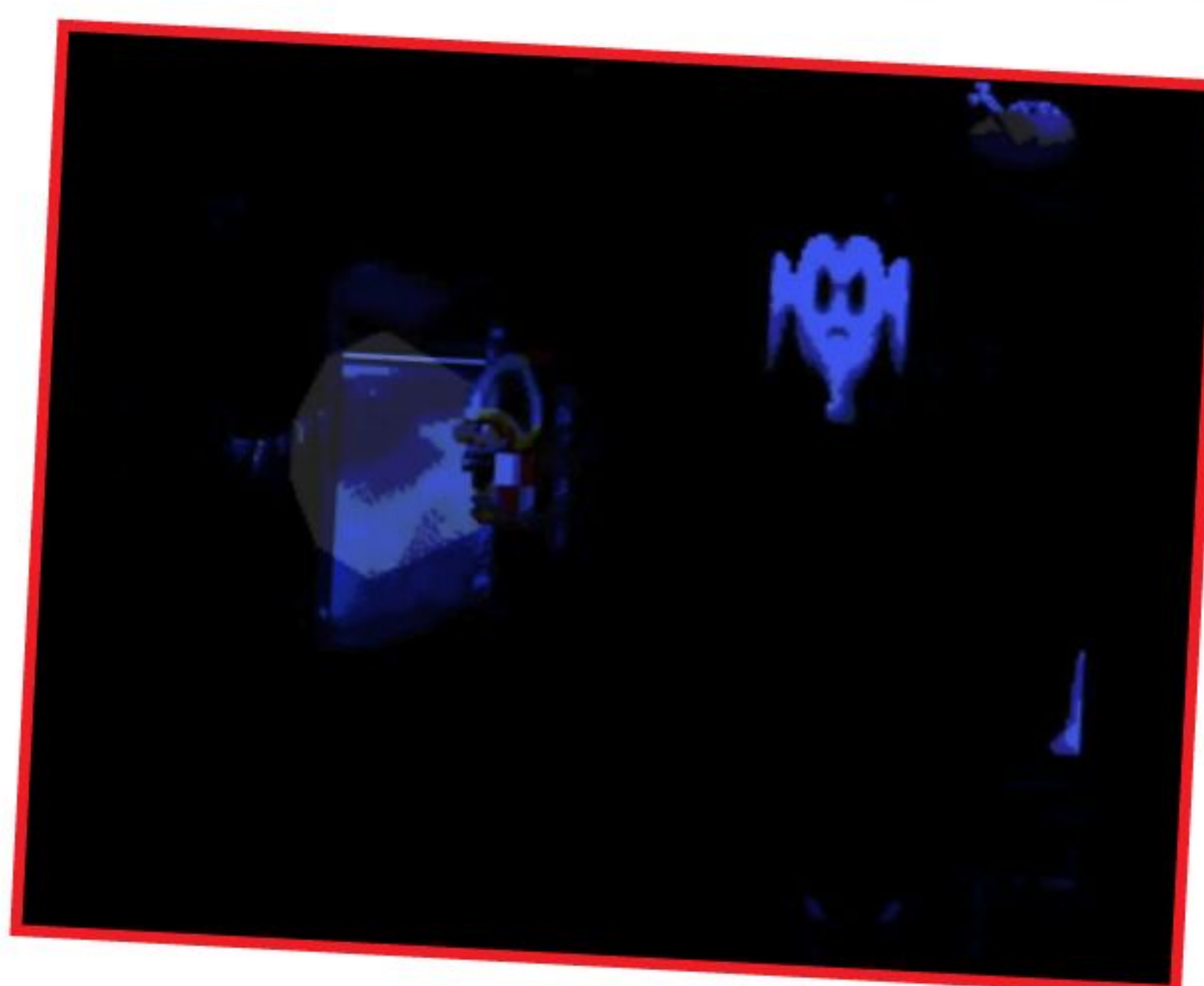
of the gameplay to modern sensibilities. A problem also may exist for those like myself with less than perfect eyesight; the zoomed-in perspective, large sprites, and fast scrolling may be a little nauseating in extended play, as well

as create issues with those normally skilled at mental mapping by fixed image. There is also the issue of compatibility, meaning the game is currently less accessible to as many fans, with the current release only compatible with Next hardware updated to the latest 3.02.00 core - something neither the current emulators nor certain hardware clones can currently do. I'm certainly not knowledgeable enough to

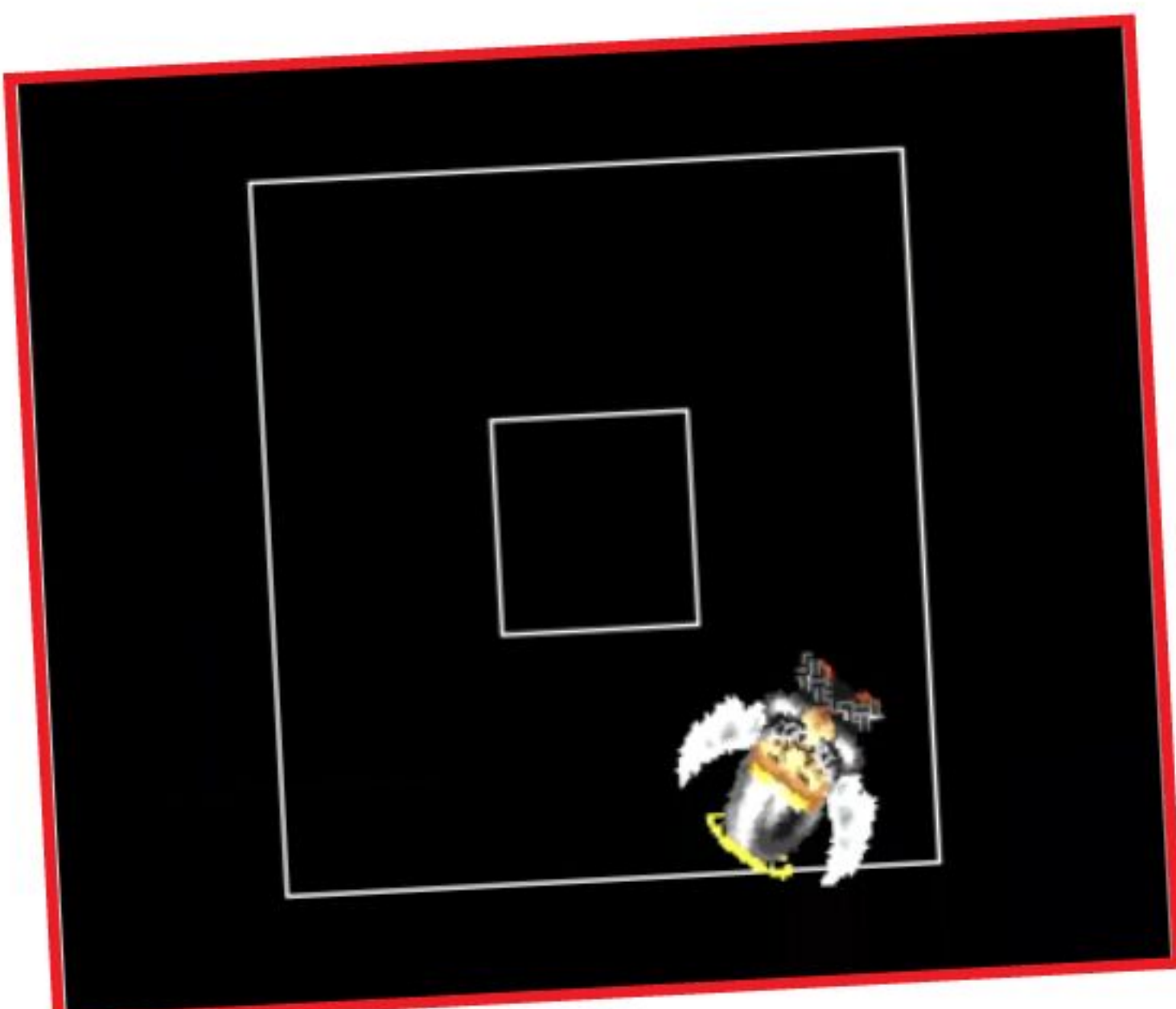
understand on a technical level why this is, or why I witnessed a couple of music freezes in my gameplay test, but of course this is a problem faced by many new Next games as the firmware continues to evolve and the impending arrival of the 'Issue 4' hardware.

However, these issues are small compared to the luxury of having such an excellent game reimaged for more advanced Spectrum hardware, and are totally forgivable when you consider the important fact that *Atic Atac* is not a commercial release made for profit. Being entirely free, there should be no reason for anyone to complain, particularly considering this isn't some disposable indie

title but is, in many ways, a superior and modern version of a once-premium game. Even when comparing this to other



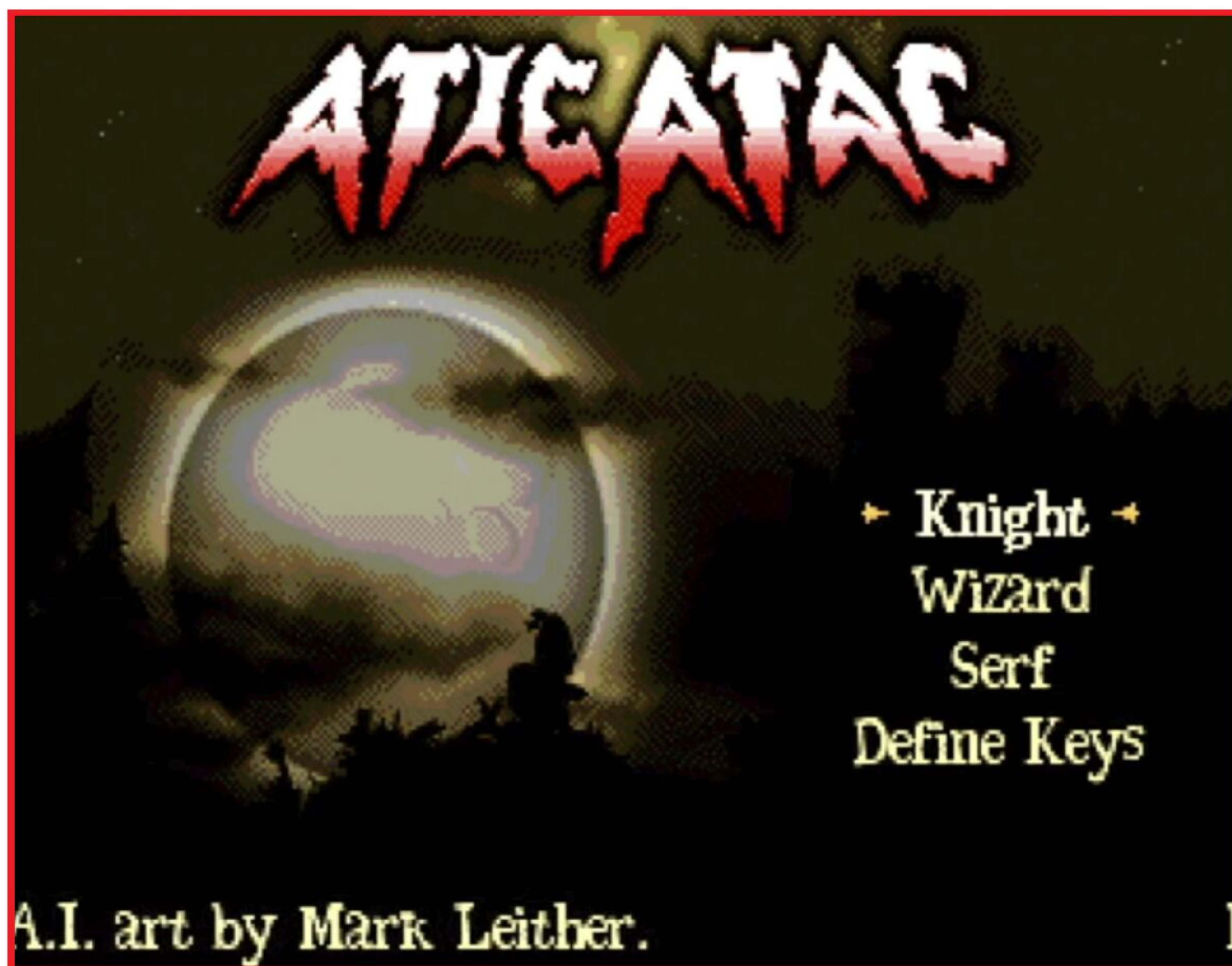
Next games, taking one look at this and playing it, then immediately comparing it with the system's first commercially-released game, *Dungeonette*, it's clear to see that development has come a long way. Impressive as the platform's *Atic Atac* clone was upon its arrival in 2018, booting up and playing





Gordon's Take

What stands out most in this brilliant remake is the dark and sombre feeling it emits. The subdued lighting and the generally muted colour scheme make the castle feel a much murkier place than what the original did. It also runs a slightly more sedate pace, losing that arcade feel that we are so used to in Ultimate's classic. Gone are the single screens, as many of the rooms, although the same, now have scrolling implemented. The remake certainly shows off a lot of the NEXT's abilities - while still retaining all the goodness that makes the original timeless. I found it a really enjoyable adaption - it will be impossible to beat the ageless thrill of the original, but it handles it with respect and gives it a slightly different atmosphere like you are walking through a well-presented haunted house in a theme park.



it side by side with this reimagining of the original game it was based on, shows how much smoother and more responsive even basic gameplay experiences are at this point.

It is a shame this game couldn't get a physical release given its unofficial status, but it's undoubtedly one that should be used as a demonstration to users new to the Next just how much of a quantum leap the system is over the old computers. Download it now; it's absolutely worth as much of a play in 2023 as it was back in 1983.

- **Craig Turner**

Comments

With superbly detailed graphics of the original neon-coloured cartoon style, an atmospheric soundtrack and all the nostalgic of the original's sound effects, this free and authentic remake definitively replaces Dungeonette as the Next's de facto dungeon crawler.

Keyboard: Q, A, O, P, SPACE, M, ENTER / redefinable

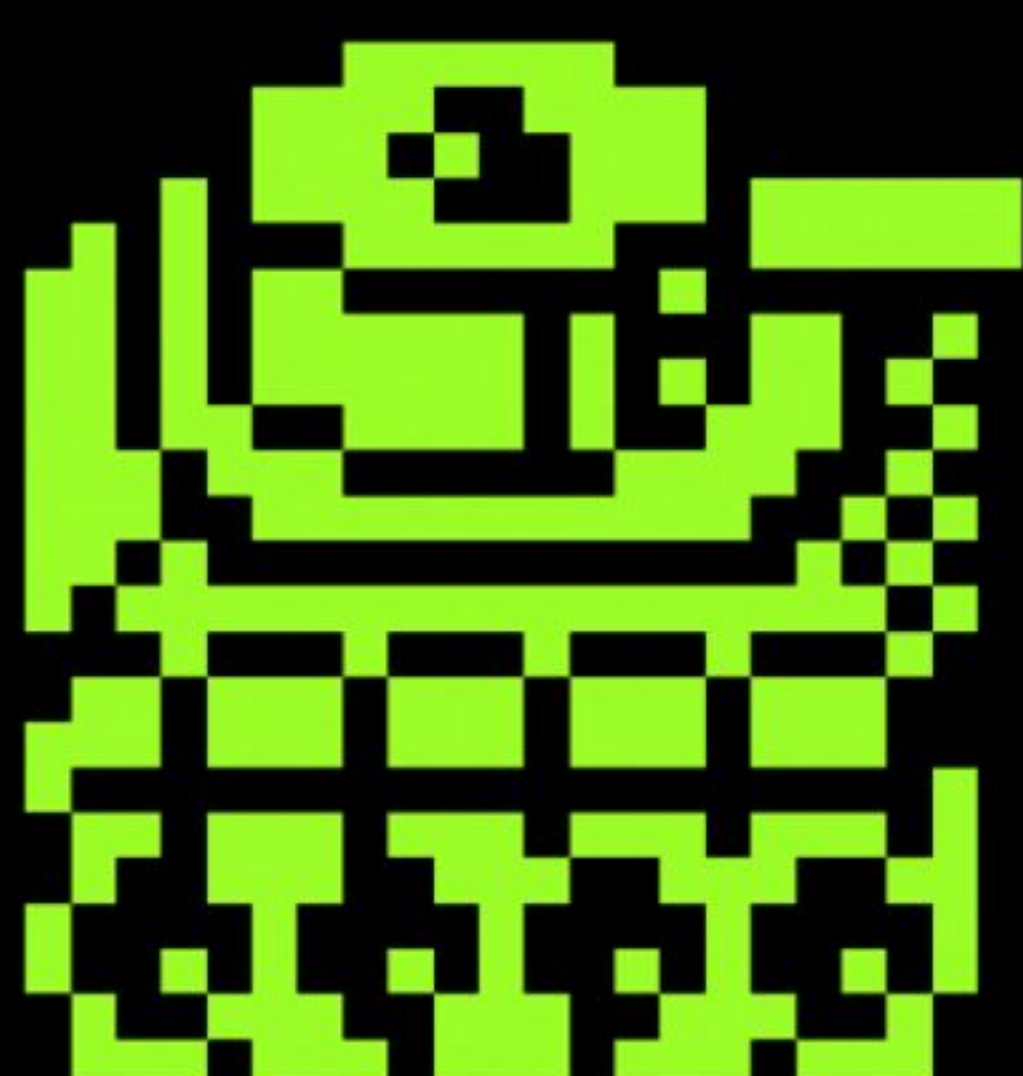
Joystick: Kempston / MD Pad

Use of Computer:	75%
Graphics:	80%
Playability:	85%
Getting started:	85%
Addictive Qualities:	80%

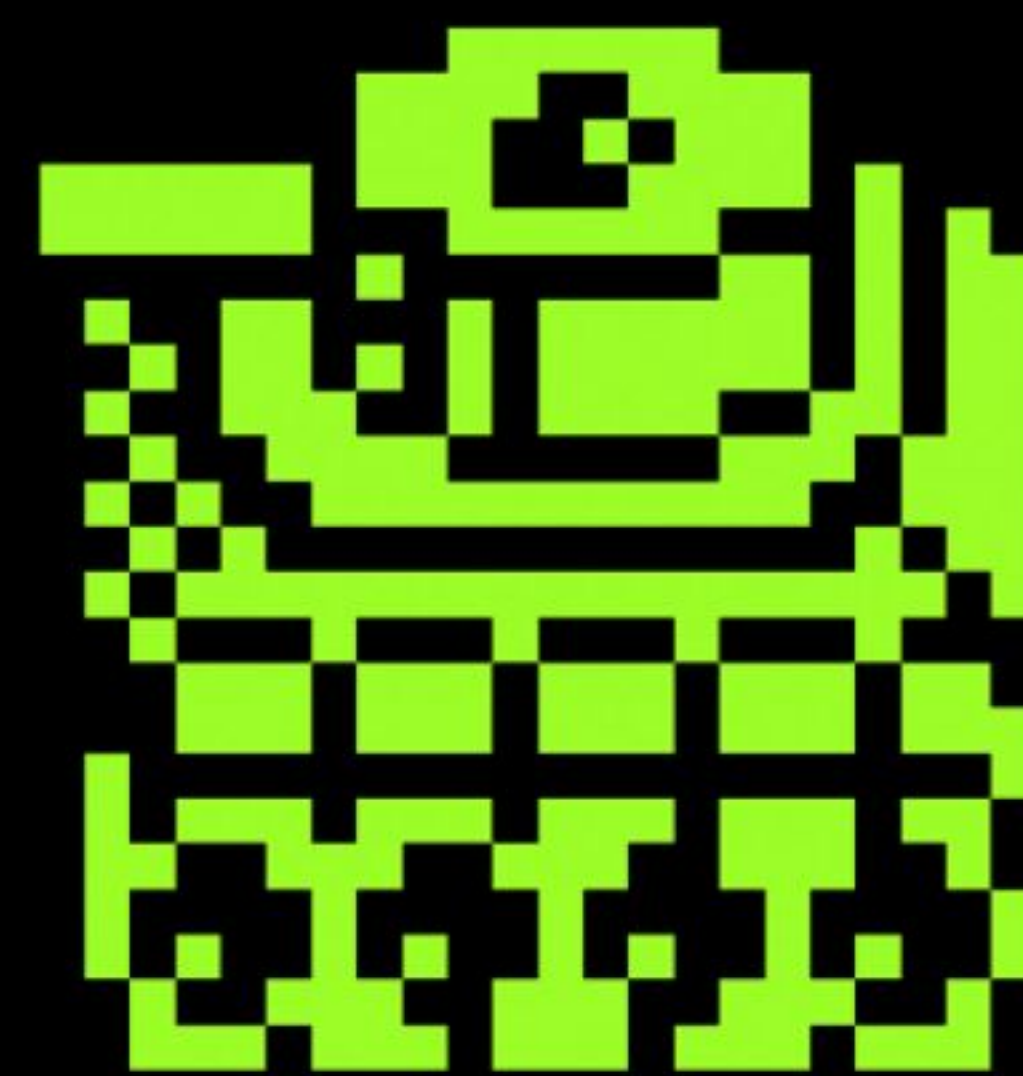
Overall: 80%

CRASH *Back Review*

Gordon King takes a look at a game which escaped the gaze of the original CRASH team.



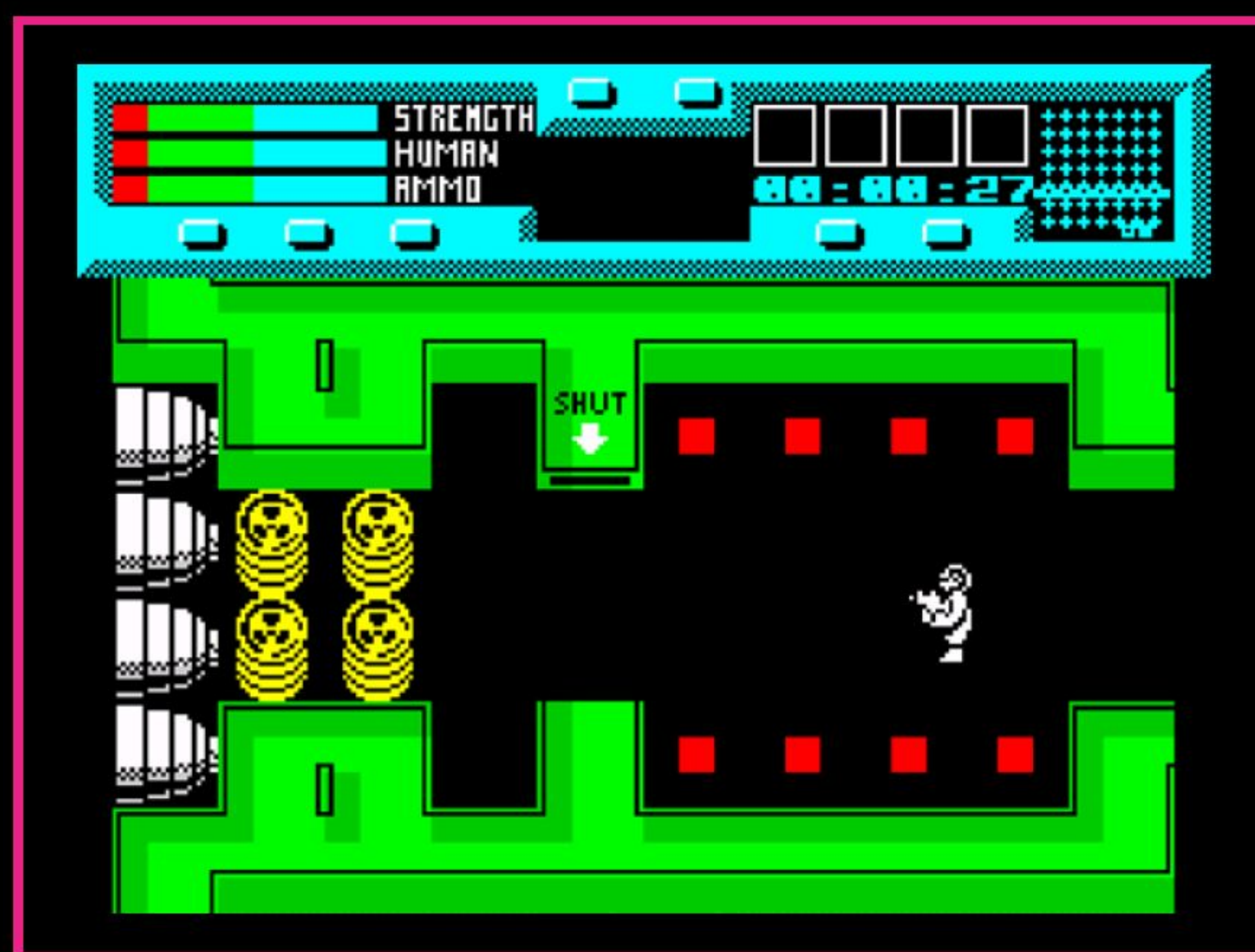
RESCUE



Icon Design Ltd / Mastertronic

£ 1.99 • 1987 • 48K

It seems a recurring theme in this month's CRASH where mankind has obliterated Earth and is now living in exile but hasn't learned from history (see *Exo-tical* review). Destined to repeat our past mistakes, the spectre of war looms again - even in the aftermath of a colossal conflict meant to be the last of its kind. The scientists stand on the cusp of a technical breakthrough that promises to carry them to distant stars in search of a new homeland. However, amidst a turbulent sea of constant rivalry, various factions believe in a different, darker purpose for this advancement - the creation of formidable weaponry. For in their eyes, supremacy goes to the one who wields the mightiest weapon. On this space station where the scientists work, the enemy forces have invaded, and only one person can stand up to these marauders - that's right, you! Assuming the role of a security officer, your primary objective is to locate the scientists and their inventions, symbolised by a vial containing red liquid. Once one of these white-coated brainiacs has been found, it becomes a bit of a herding game to guide them toward the escape pod. So, in preparation for releasing them from their laboratory, it is prudent to familiarise yourself with the layout and begin blocking exits that lead in a different direction. This can be done by picking up objects found

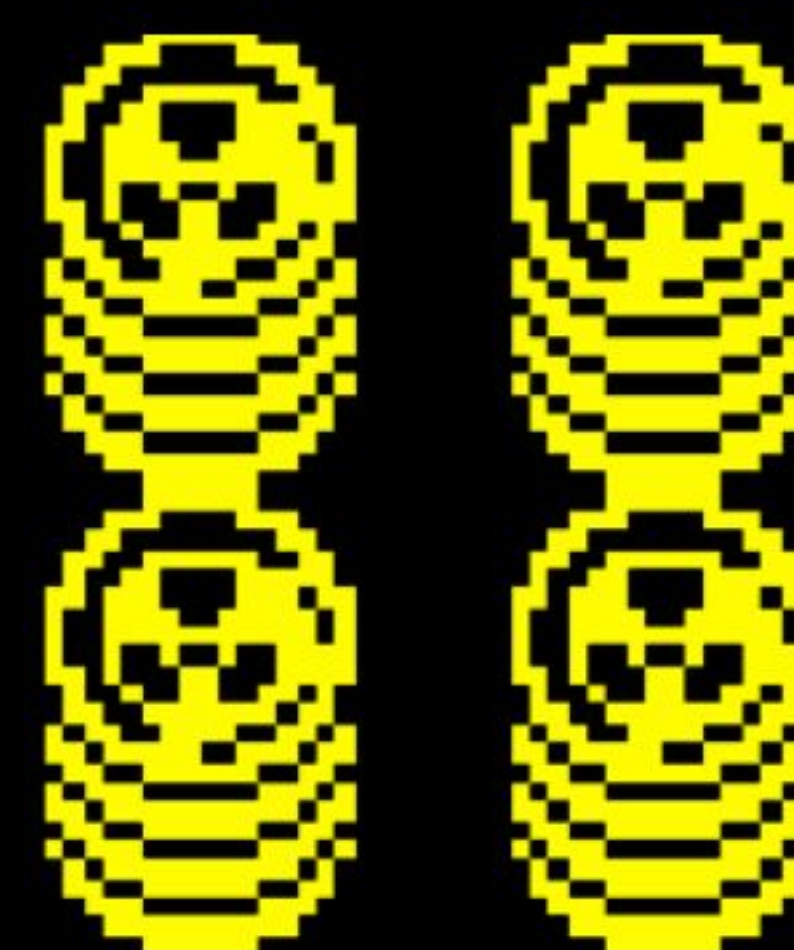
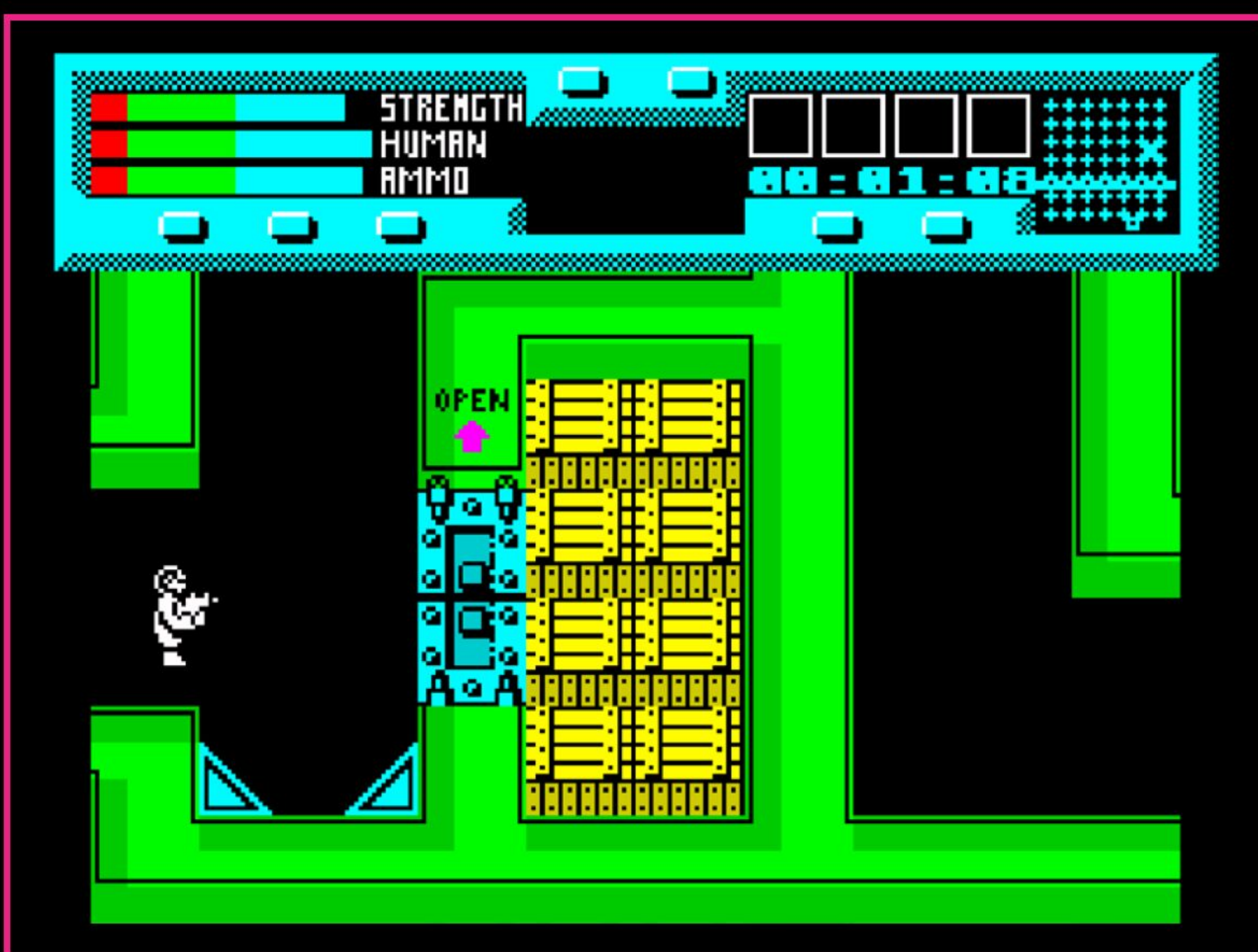


throughout the space station. Remember that the station is under attack, and hostile robots have infiltrated the premises. This is where your training in weaponry comes in handy. Thankfully, there are teleporters that will make things a little easier for you, and the enemy doesn't know about these.

Criticism

It's quite unusual that CRASH magazine never reviewed this back in the day; in fact, only Your Sinclair briefly covered it. For a budget game from 1987, it's a rather enjoyable shooter-come-herding





Comments

Rescue represents a game of the era it was made. The top-down maze-like game has a nice twist over its contemporaries of the time due to it not solely focusing on shooting. Its graphics have held up reasonably and it is a game worthy of a retrospective review.

Keyboard: Redefinable
Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston & Cursor

Use of Computer:	74%
Graphics:	69%
Playability:	78%
Getting started:	71%
Addictive Qualities:	69%
Overall:	71%

game. The action portion races along, with enemy bots patrolling the entire station, often entering your screen unexpectedly, leading to frantic firing. The real stressor is the herding. This game comes with a guarantee: you'll find yourself vehemently cursing the scientists.



For people supposedly intelligent, they are utterly stupid when it comes to running about like a headless chicken. This is where the real challenge is, and guiding them towards the space pod is infuriating. It's still decent fun for a budget title.

- Gordon King

CRASH *Back* Issue 18

Paul Davies straps on his rose tinted glasses and takes us back to CRASH of yesteryear.



side, there's a lady in a rather, erm, 'interesting' costume which, in addition to her rather large sword, makes up for being chained. Or indeed, adds to the overall excitement. Whatever floats your boat, I guess...

stares and drools at the lady wearing chains and not much else

Where was I?

Yes, enough of that. Let's just get on with it.

Dun-dun, dun-dun, dun-dun, dun-dun, *Dun Darach*! Aah, I bet you thought I'd gone mad then, or at least you thought that CRASH would be trying to recycle the same article as last month. As if we'd do that. Ahem. I'm not sure who *Dun Darach* is, but you could say he's in quite the predicament on the cover this month. Chained around the neck, waist, and hands, he's going nowhere fast. On the plus



If there's one thing that drives me insane, it's the pelvic thrust. But on the plus side, if you take a jump to the left in Boots, you may well fall into their display of CRL's latest release - *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Anyone who has seen the movie would be intrigued to know what exactly you get up in the Speccy incarnation of this particular musical. Does it come with a pair of tights and suspenders for you to put on while you play?

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately) not, but what it does come with are a lot

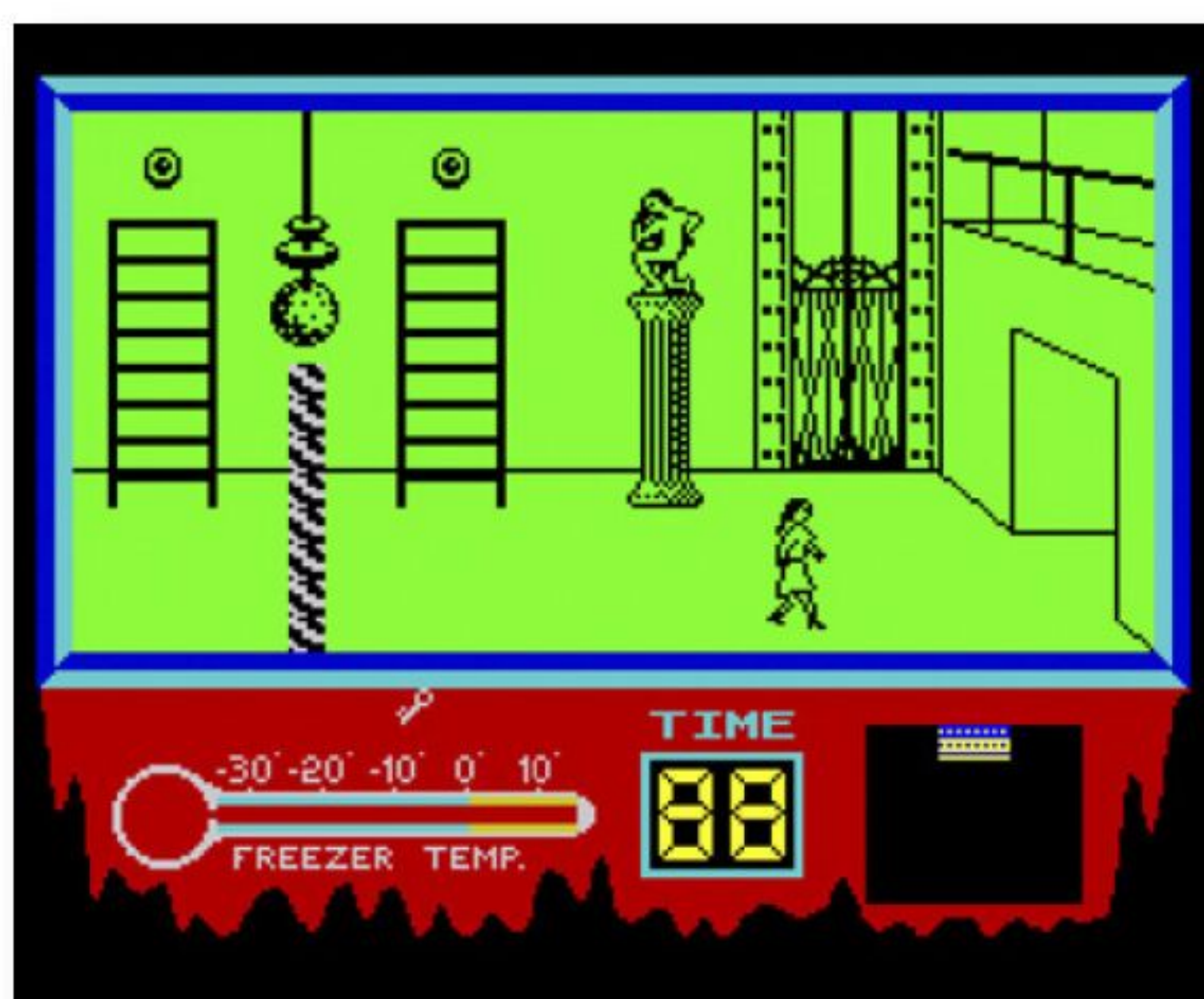
of the other elements found in the film:

Janet, Scott, Eddie, Riff Raff, Columbia, and Meatloaf. Sorry, I mean Eddie. Of course, Frank 'n' Furter makes an appearance, too, but as with most of the other





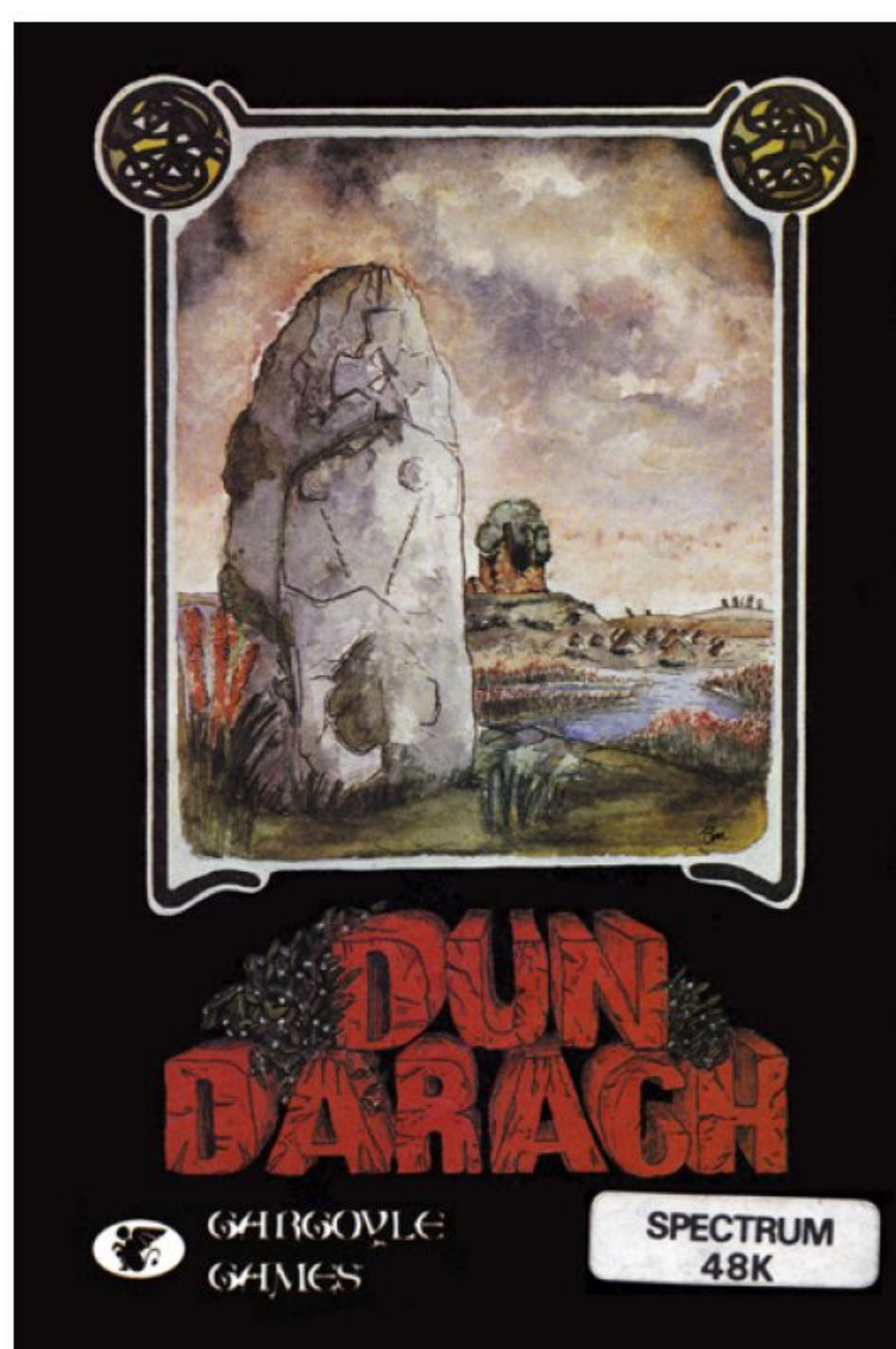
mentioned characters, you'd be better to try and stay away from him. You choose to control either Janet or Scott, with the other getting turned into stone (similarly to the scene in the film), and it is then up to you to navigate the large house, trying to find



the piece of the De-Medusa machine, to un-stone your love. That sounds weird. Anyhoo, Riff Raff will try and zap you, Eddie will try to kill you with Frank also on that end of the 'I would like to do painful things to you' spectrum. I guess, like in the film. The only character that seems like they don't want to kill you is Columbia, who will instead strip you naked. I hope I don't end up bumping into her. Ahem. The game seems like a lot of fun, going

from the review, so perhaps it's one to grab to join in with the anarchy and joviality - definitely not so I can see some naked Spectrum sprites. Definitely not.

Dun Darach - well, it turns out that isn't the name of the character, it's Cuchulainn the Great from *Tir Na Nog*. Of course it is. You may think to yourself, didn't he die in *Tir Na Nog*?



And you'd be right, but this isn't a game featuring his ghost, and he hasn't been reincarnated, this is a prequel set in the early years before *Tir Na Nog*. The story this time is that after a night of refreshment with your charioteer, Lóeg, Lóeg



is called outside the inn, at which you parked your chariot earlier, by a lady who needs help with her horse-drawn carriage. Time passes and Lóeg has not returned (I can see what has happened here, the cheeky devil) so Cuchulainn pops outside to see his chariot gone and his horse slain (well, maybe it wasn't such a cheeky escapade after all).



The lady in question, it turns out, was Skar, a Sorceress and ally of the Connachmen who had taken Lóeg in retribution for the death of the Prince of Connachta. I think Cuchulainn may have had a hand in that. Oops. You must venture into the



bringing us James Bond's firrsht foray into the world of computer gamesch. Sorry, slipped into Sean Connery then (not literally). Besides, it's Mr. Raised Eyebrow himself, Roger Moore, who's wearing the tuxedo (and communal Bond girdle for Bond actors over a certain age that he shares with Mr. Connery, no doubt) here, and he's the main man you control as you take on another evil villain, hell-bent on destroying the world/

city of *Dun Darach*, as that is where she had taken him, and rescue poor Lóeg before she does to him what she did to your horse. This time around, the game will have you interact with a lot more people and surroundings, with puzzles to be solved, items to be bought/stolen, and people to be bartered with. It looks to be a bit of a triumph all around - excellent animation and graphics, a huge map, and excellent attention to detail.

A CRASH SMASH, you'll not be surprised to learn - those guys and girls at Gargoyle really do pull out all the stops and deserve all the accolades that have been thrown at them. Excellent stuff.

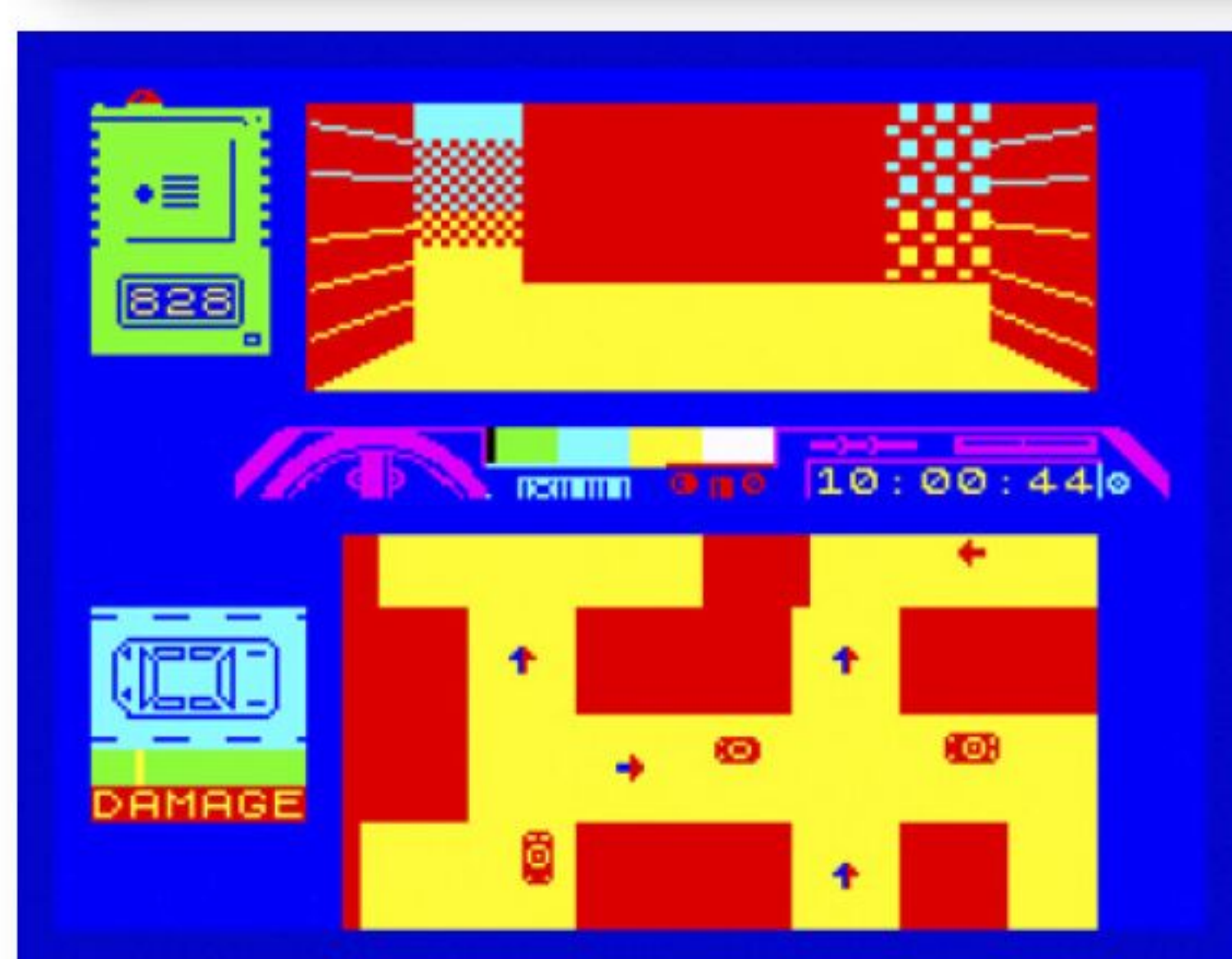
The last band I'd ever take advice from is Duran Duran. 'Dance into the fire'? No, you're alright Simon, I'll leave it, thanks. That line, of course, is taken from the theme of the latest upcoming Bond movie 'A View to a Kill', which conveniently leads us on to this next game...*A View to a Kill*. Damn, that was smooth. If you're thinking, 'I bet there hasn't been an actual official game of a Bond film ever', then you'd be thinking right. Domark has the honours of

world domination/owning lots of gold things - delete as applicable. But what is it like? The game is set into three parts, each part representing an action sequence taken from the film. The theme of the film is that a baddie called Max Zorin plans to blow up Silicon Valley with a thermonuclear device in order to (get this) corner the silicon chip market and put every other computer company out of business. A tad extreme, Mr Zorin? Just a bit. How about inventing your own super-powerful chip that outperforms the others instead? Couple that with a strong marketing campaign, and you'd be in business. Sensible, but not very Bond-like. Anyway, as a first computer game





they assume the mission is to rescue his girlfriend from a large mansion, in which she has been locked inside a safe. Hmm... I would guess that you wouldn't have much time if that was the case. Dan needs to collect the sticks of dynamite from around the grand house to blow said safe to rescue his girlfriend. Around the house are several interesting, and also terrifying-looking creatures and contraptions in your way. Additionally, it would also seem that there



outing for Bond, it's not a bad one by all accounts. Each section plays well and there's even some speech in some parts (wool) and what sounds like a nice intro, based on the usual Bond stroll across the screen before he shoots the cameraman. 76%? 'Not bad, Mr Bond. But now you must die...in the most slow, badly built contraption ever designed so you can make your escape. Good luck!'.

Ooh, now what's this that's popped up next? *Dynamite Dan* is the name of the game and is also the



name of the protagonist it features. One of the most colourful platformers I've ever seen, if I'm quite honest with you. CRASH states that as they only have a pre-production copy,



you to collect the dynamite and any power-ups you may come across, too. There's the inevitable comparison to *Jet Set Willy* here, though CRASH states that although they do indeed have similarities, *Dynamite Dan* is the better game. Better graphics, better layout, better design, and better sound. That's quite the claim, but looking at the shots here, you'd be hard pushed to disagree in some of those categories.

are falls, water, and electricity that will have you lose one of your ten lives, as well. Each room needs to be navigated meticulously to enable

Dan's sprite is clearly a lot more detailed, and larger, than Willy and some of the other sprites look excellent too, with a lot of originality involved. It does indeed look a beaut, and a CRASH SMASH to boot! Hey, that rhymes. I could be a rapper with these mad skills. A rating of 94? Now, that's a high score. I must go out and buy it, and then go and... play it? Okay, maybe



my rapping days have quickly fallen behind me. If they were ever there at all.

Let's finish on a low, shall we? Although it's great to have Billy Connolly belting out the song at the beginning, the TV show itself isn't much cop, and it turns out the game follows suit. Of course, it's *Super Gran*, and with a show as bad as this one, there's only so much superpowered granny you can take. Or should that be cannae take? Anyhoo. On the first level, *Super Gran* puts you in control of the Scottish superhero as you take to the skies in your flycycle (a flying bicycle... yes), taking on an imposter



Super Gran who is also equipped with a flycycle. Take out *Super Gran* mark 2 (however it is you do that), and then it's on to level 2, which sees you equipped with an anti- (surely that should be granny? Oh, not that type of auntie - carry on!) gravity belt, allowing you to drift up and down the screen to stop cars from ... running over cats? Running over cats. I think I've read enough. CRASH hates



it. I haven't even played it and I hate it already. A badly-made TV tie-in with badly drawn graphics, irritating sound, and terrible gameplay, all for the bargain

price of, wait for it...£9.95. For that price, I'd want them to cancel the show off the back of my purchase.

So, that's it. Some games here will no doubt go on to be classics, in my humblest of opinions, and games with very contrasting efforts from different software houses. Some with no effort, it would seem. If you're feeling a little bit down after that last game, then I hold my hands up for intentionally saying that we'd end on a low. Apologies. Do you know what always lifts the spirits though? A good sing-song! Join in after me...

1...2...1, 2, 3, 4....

Stand back, Superman, Ice Man, Spiderman. Batman and Robin, too!

I don't want to cause a ruckus...actually, that's enough. I'm off.

See you next time!



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